

الإسراء والمعراج



al-ʿIsrā wa-l-Miʿrāj *or*

The Night Journey

notes for a talk given at:

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by

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❦ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ❦

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا ۚ
إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

subḥāna-l-ladhī °asrā bi-°abādihi laylam-mina-l-masjidi-l-ḥarām
°ila-l-masjidi-l-°aqāṣa-l-ladhī bāraknā ḥowlahu li-nuriyahu min °ayātina
innahu huwa-s-samī°u-l-baṣīr

Glorified be He Who carried His worshipper by night
from the Place of Inviolable Prostration (*masjidi-l-ḥarām*)
to the Place of Furthest Prostration (*masjidi-l-°aqāṣā*)
the neighborhood of which We have blessed
that We might show him some of Our Signs
Surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing
(al-°Isrā° 17:1)



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Qurʾān

Glorified be He Who carried His worshipper by night
from the Place of Inviolable Prostration (*maṣjidi-l-ḥarām*)
to the Place of Furthest Prostration (*maṣjidi-lʾaḡāṣā*)
the neighborhood of which We have blessed
that We might show him some of Our Signs
Surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing
(Sūratu-l-ʾIsrāʾ 17:1)



I swear!

By the Fig and the Olive, and Mount Sinai and this City made safe.
(Sūratu-t-Tīn 95:1-3)



And [Remember] when We said to you:
“Surely your Lord has encompassed the people [all about].”
We did not make the true dream (*ruʾya*) which We showed you
except as a trial for the people,
and [in the same way], the cursed tree [mentioned] in the Qurʾān.
We warn them but it does nothing
except increase them in transgression.
(Sūratu-l-ʾIsrāʾ 17:60)



For indeed he saw him another time
at the Cedar Tree of the Furthest Boundary
– near to the Garden of Refuge –
where there covered the Cedar Tree what covered it!
(His) sight never veered nor did it stray.
Indeed he saw the greatest among the signs of his Lord.
(Sūratu-n-Najm 53:13-18)



Ḥadīth

Narrated Jābir bin ʿAbdullāh ؓ that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say:
“When the people of Quraysh did not believe me
(about the story of my Night Journey),
I stood up in al-Hijr and Allāh showed me al-Quds right before me,
and I began describing it to them while I was looking at it.
(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Volume 5, Book 58, Number 226)

A saḥābī ﷺ said, “Oh Prophet of Allāh, do not tell the people this story, for they will call you a liar and they will insult you!”

But he ﷺ wanted to tell them how he had travelled to al-Quds – that he had made a miraculous journey – leaving the Kaʿabah in Makkah the night before, and returning before the break of dawn. He conveyed his story to the people loud and clear, with full confidence in what he had to say.

The people of Makkah listening to this story called him a madman. They sought out, ʾĀbū Bakr ﷺ the trusted companion of the Prophet ﷺ to tell him that his friend had definitely overstepped and gone beyond the boundaries of reality.

“He’s a madman,” they told ʾĀbū Bakr ﷺ, He is insisting that he travelled from Makkah to al-Quds and back, in one night.

ʾĀbū Bakr ﷺ was hesitant, thinking that perhaps the Quraysh were fabricating a story to make his friend look bad in the hope that his ﷺ faith in the Prophet ﷺ would be shaken. He ﷺ soon realized that they were telling him the actual story that the Prophet ﷺ had told and said, “If he ﷺ said that’s what happened, then it must be true,”

Later the Prophet ﷺ went with his friend ﷺ and a handful of other believers and told them the whole story of his journey. In talking to the people he ﷺ had left out an important portion of his story. If the Quraysh had thought he was a madman with his travels to al-Quds (Jerusalem) the Prophet ﷺ would have been totally discredited had he ﷺ told them about his ascension to the Gardens of the Heavens.

What follows is some of the story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj, No one knows every detail of the story but we will do our best to tell the tale of the Night Journey of the Prophet ﷺ with as much detail as possible. It goes like this:

It was in the month of Rajab when the ceiling of the house in which the Prophet ﷺ was staying was opened, and the Angel Jibrīl ﷺ descended and cut open his ﷺ chest and washed it with Zamzam water. Then he emptied something from a container into the chest of the Prophet ﷺ to increase his wisdom as well as the strength of his belief. This was done to prepare him for that which he had yet to see in the upper worlds from among the wonders of the creation.

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

The miracle of al-ʾIsrāʾ is confirmed by Allāh ﷻ in the Qurʾānic ʾāyāt which we quoted at the very beginning of this essay.

Glorified be He Who carried His worshipper by night
from the Place of Inviolable Prostration (*masjidi-l-ḥarām*)
to the Place of Furthest Prostration (*masjidi-lʾaḡṣā*)
the neighborhood of which We have blessed
that We might show him some of Our Signs.
Surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

(Sūratu-l-ʾIsrāʾ 17:1)

This journey is also confirmed in the Ṣaḥīḥ Hadīth. As such, there is scholarly consensus (*ijmaʿ*) that the Prophet ﷺ journeyed in body and soul the night of al-ʾIsrāʾ from Masjid al-Ḥaram in Makkah to Masjid al-Aqsa in al-Quds (Jerusalem). Moreover, these scholars indicated the person who denies al-ʾIsrāʾ is a blasphemer for belying the explicit text of the Qurʾān.

After the Prophet ﷺ performed the Evening Prayer (al-ʿIshāʾ), Jibrīl ﷺ came to him with a white animal, slightly larger than a donkey yet smaller than a mule. This animal's name was *al-Burāq* (lightning/البُرَاق) and is one of the animals of Paradise.

From this name “al-Burāq”, it should be known, he is an extremely swift animal the length of whose stride is the farthest distance that it's eye can see. Whenever he faces a mountain his hind legs extend, and whenever he goes downhill his front legs extend. He also has two wings which lend him further speed and strength.

Grabbing hold of al-Burāq by his ear Jibrīl ﷺ told the Prophet ﷺ to mount it and ride.



He bucked when the Prophet ﷺ came to mount him. Jibrīl ﷺ put his hand on his mane and said: “Are you not ashamed, Oh Burāq? By Allāh, no one has ridden you in all creation more dear to Allāh ﷻ than he is.” Hearing this al-Burāq was so ashamed that he sweated until he became soaked, and quieted down and stood still so that the Prophet ﷺ could mount him and they began their journey.

In a twinkling the Prophet ﷺ and Jibrīl ﷺ arrived in a land filled with many palm trees. Jibrīl ﷺ told the Prophet ﷺ to dismount and pray, so the Prophet ﷺ dismounted from al-Burāq and in this place he prayed two rakʿas.

When ﷺ he had completed his ṣalāt, Jibrīl ﷺ asked him, “Do you know where you prayed?” and the Prophet ﷺ answered, “Allāh ﷻ knows best.” Jibrīl ﷺ told him, “This is Yathrib; this is Taybah.” which are two names for the city now known as al-Madinah.

al-Burāq continued with the Prophet ﷺ and Jibrīl ﷺ until they reached another place which was a mountain in a land of deserts. Again Jibrīl ﷺ told the Prophet ﷺ to get down and pray. The Prophet ﷺ dismounted there and again prayed two rakʿah. Jibrīl ﷺ informed the Prophet ﷺ that this was Jabal Sināi (aṭ-Ṭūr/الطور). where the Prophet Musā ﷺ had received Revelation from Allāh ﷻ.

When he had completed his prayers on the Mountain of Sinai, al-Burāq took off again with the Prophet ﷺ and Jibrīl ﷺ and once again they stopped, this time at Bīr Sabʿa (The Seven Wells) near to al-Khalīl in Filisṭīn where the Prophets ʾIbrāhīm and ʾIshaq ﷺ lived and again the Prophet ﷺ dismounted and prayed two rakʿah.

Completing his prayers, he once more mounted al-Burāq, and after a brief time again Jibrīl ﷺ told the Prophet ﷺ to dismount and again he prayed two rakʿah. This was in Bayt Laḥm (Bethlehem), where Prophet ʿIsa ﷺ (Jesus) was born.

Then al-Burāq continued with the Messenger ﷺ and after facing some obstacles, including ad-Dajjal (المسيح الدجال), they finally entered the city of al-Quds. There the Prophet ﷺ went to the Place of al-Aqsa. On the walls of al-Aqsa was a ring used by the Messengers ﷺ to tie their animals and here the Prophet ﷺ tied al-Burāq.

Then the Prophet ﷺ entered the wide courtyard of al-ʾAqṣā where Allāh ﷻ had assembled for him ﷺ all the prophets — from Adam to ʾIsa ﷺ — and it was in this vast courtyard that the Prophet ﷺ stepped forward and led all the Prophets ﷺ in prayer.

It is worth mentioning that on the journey of the Prophet ﷺ from Masjid al-Ḥaram to Masjid al-ʾAqṣā, Allāh ﷻ enabled the Prophet ﷺ to see some of His wondrous creations and showed him the world (*dunya*) in the form of an old woman wearing a great deal of jewelry as well as many other things like people whose lips and tongues were clipped with scissors made of fire. Jibrīl ﷺ told the Prophet ﷺ, “These are the speakers of sedition (*fitna*) who call people to misguidance.” More of the numerous and truly wonderful and often horrifying things he ﷺ saw can be found in the many accounts detailing his travels across the land on al-Burāq.

I should also make note that I have read that al-Burāq was also said to have carried ʾIbrahim ﷺ when he visited his wife Hajar and son Ismaʿīl ﷺ. According to tradition, ʾIbrahim ﷺ lived with Sara at Bir Sabaʿ and al-Burāq would carry him to Makkah to see his family there, and take him back to Bir Sabaʿ. I have not been able to substantiate these reports but mention this as being of interest.

Another item of interest is the following ḥadīth taken from Book 1, Number 317 of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukḥārī:

“ʾAbū al-ʿAliya ﷺ reported: ʾIbn Abbās, the son of the uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, told us that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had observed: ‘On the night of my night journey I passed by Mūsā b. ʾImran ﷺ, a man light brown in complexion, tall, well-built as if he was one of the men of the Ṣhanuʿa, and saw ʾIsa ﷺ son of Maryam as a medium-statured man with white and red complexion and crisp hair, and I was shown Mālik the guardian of Fire, and ad-Dajjāl (المسيح الدجال) amongst the signs which were shown to me by Allāh ﷻ.’”

There are also stories of how ad-Dajjāl tried to bar the way of the Prophet ﷺ when he was on his way to al-ʾAqṣā and, in relation to this, Mujamma Ibn al-Harīth ﷺ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Ibn Maryam ﷺ will kill al-Dajjal at the door of Ludd (a town in Filistīn) directly to the west of al-Quds.” (Aḥmad and at-Tirmidhī)

In any case, after the Prophet ﷺ took his Night Journey (*al-ʾIsrāʾ*) from Masjīd al-Ḥaram to Masjīd al-ʾAqṣā and led all the Prophets ﷺ in prayer, he began his ascent to the upper heavens.

The Prophet ﷺ ascended into the heavens from the rock under the familiar golden dome that has become the symbol for al-Quds (Jerusalem) on a set of moving stairs, called *al-mirqāt*, in which one step is made of gold and the next of silver. *al-Mirqāt* is also called the angels' stairway, which they use to descend from the *Jannah* down to the earth and to ascend up to the heavens again.

This is a journey that no other human had ever made or has made since. It demonstrates the ability of Allāh ﷻ to bring the seemingly impossible into being. Here, the concepts of time and space as we know them do not apply, as it is beyond our human capabilities to understand the true omnipotence of Allāh ﷻ. In his sayings and traditions, the Prophet ﷺ described the size of the heavens; the first heaven, as compared to the second, is similar to a small ring in the desert, and he continued this narrative until he described the sixth heaven as being the size of a ring in the desert compared to the seventh heaven. The magnitude of this is unimaginable. Our earth, and what we call the universe, is contained within the first heaven. Even with the knowledge of our time, we have no idea how big this is, how far the universe extends, or what wonders it contains.

When the Prophet ﷺ and Jibrīl ﷺ arrived at the first heaven, Jibrīl ﷺ requested the gate to be opened. The angel assigned to that gate asked Jibrīl ﷺ, "Who is with you?" Jibrīl answered, "Muḥammad." The angel asked Jibrīl ﷺ, "Was he sent? Is it time for him to ascend to the heavens?" Jibrīl ﷺ said, "Yes." So, the gate was opened for him, and the Prophet ﷺ entered the first heaven.

There the Prophet ﷺ saw Adam ﷺ. To the right of Adam ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ saw some bodies, and to the left of Adam ﷺ, other bodies. If Adam ﷺ looked to his right he would laugh, and if he would look to his left he would cry. Adam ﷺ was in fact seeing the souls of his descendants. Those on his right were his descendants who would die as believers and those on his left were his descendants who would die as non-believers.

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

He greeted him with the greeting of all Muslims, — *as-salāmu ʿalaykum* — Adam ﷺ returned the greeting and expressed his faith in the prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ. He called him his pure son, the pure prophet. We can only begin to imagine the pleasure that this meeting must have given to both men. After thousands of years, Adam ﷺ was able to see his descendent Muḥammad ﷺ, the greatest of his descendants, and the Prophet ﷺ was able to look into the eyes of the father ﷺ of mankind.

Then the Prophet ﷺ ascended to the second heaven. In this second heaven was where he saw the Prophets ʿIsa and Yaḥya ﷺ, who are cousins, as their mothers were sisters. They welcomed the Prophet ﷺ and made supplication (*duʿāʾ*) for him for all good things.

The Prophet ﷺ then ascended to the third heaven, where he found Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ who, as we know, was extremely handsome. The Prophet ﷺ described him as an embodiment of half of all beauty in the world. Yūsuf ﷺ received him with a warm welcome and made supplication (*duʿāʾ*) for him for good things.

In the fourth heaven, the Prophet ﷺ met ʾIdrīs ﷺ, whom Allāh ﷻ described in Qurʾān (19:57) as being elevated to a very high level.

وَإِذْ كُنَّا فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ ؑ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا • وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا

wa-dhkur fi-l-kitābi-ʾidrīs; ʾinnahu kāna ṣiddiqan-nabiyyā
wa rafaʿanāhu makānan ʿalīm

And remember in the Book, ʾIdrīs, surely he was a truthful one,
a Prophet, [and] We raised him to a high station.

(Sūrah Maryam 19.57)

In the fifth heaven, the Prophet ﷺ met Hārūn ﷺ, the older brother of Mūsā ﷺ. At each meeting, the Prophets ﷺ expressed their faith in the prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ.

In the sixth heaven, the Prophet ﷺ met Musā ﷺ. After they had exchanged greetings and Musā ﷺ had, as had all the Prophets ﷺ in the previous heavens, expressed his faith in the prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ, Musā ﷺ began to weep. When the Prophet ﷺ asked why, Musā ﷺ replied: “A young man has come after me, and more of his followers will enter paradise than my followers.”

Before the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, all the Prophets ﷺ delivered their message of submission to the One to their own people; Muḥammad ﷺ, however, had come for all of humankind. Allāh ﷻ refers to him as a mercy and says in the Qurʾān:

وَمِنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أُذُنٌ
قُلْ أُذُنٌ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ

wa minhumu-l-ladhīna yuʿdhūna-n-nabiyy wa yaqūlūna huwa ʿūdḥūn
qul ʿudḥunu khayrin lakum yuʿminu bi-llāhi wa yuʿminu lilmuʾminīn
wa raḥmatul-l-ladhīna ʿāmanū minkum.

And there are those who malign the Prophet, saying,

“He is [only] an ear.

Say, “[He is] the ear of goodness for [all] you who believe in Allāh
and those who believe in the believers,
and [he is] a Mercy to [all] those among you who believe.”

(Sūratu-t-Tawbah 9:62)

His message reaches beyond all tribal and cultural boundaries as his message is for all the worlds, not any one single community. The Prophets of Allāh ﷻ stood behind him and supported him in accord with his saying that all of the Prophets ﷺ are brothers. Thus, when they all prayed behind him at al-ʿAqṣā there was finally a congregation (*jamaʿ*) of a true, real and lasting brotherhood.

Allāh ﷻ rewarded His Messenger ﷺ and caused him to understand that the Prophets ﷺ before him also went through difficult times preaching to their people. They all stood behind the Prophet ﷺ and acknowledged him as their leader. This was another indication of his importance and excellence as well as the nature of his message.

The Prophet ﷺ and Jibrīl ﷺ then ascended to the seventh heaven to meet with our great grandfather, the Prophet ʿIbrāhīm ؑ who he found seated with his back against al-Baytu-l-Maʿmur. To the dwellers in Jannah, al-Baytu-l-Maʿmur or The Much-Frequented Shrine is as the Kaʿbah is to the inhabitants of the Earth.

al-Bayti-l-Maʿmūr (الْبَيْتُ الْمَعْمُورُ), also called The Enduring House of Worship, is in fact directly above the Kaʿbah, and every day 70,000 angels enter it, then exit from it, and never return. The next day another 70,000 angels go, come out, and never return. This will continue until the Day of Judgment. In this, there is an indication of the greatness of the numbers of the angels – in fact their numbers are far more than that of the humans and the jinn all put together.

The Prophet ʾIbrahim ؑ, as we said, was leaning against al-Bayti-l-Maʿmūr because he and his son, Ismaʿil ؑ, rebuilt the Kaʿbah. The rule is that one reaps the fruits of his or her labors. He is leaning on it because he labored on re-building it in his life, and now he can rest in the hereafter.

The Prophet ﷺ, in speaking about his visit there, said, “After this, I came upon a person all drowned in Light. He was seated upon a throne in an attitude of awesome dignity, and before him was a multitude of little children. I asked Jibrīl ؑ who was this person of such light, majesty and awe, and who were all the children with him. The angel answered me, ‘This is your great grandfather ʾIbrahim ؑ. He loves you and the entire nation that believes in you.

‘He once prayed to the Lord of the Worlds that he might be of service to your nation, and the Lord heard his supplication. He gave him all these little children who are the little boys and girls from your nation who die before reaching adulthood. Allāh ﷻ has entrusted ʾIbrahim ؑ with their upbringing and education. Until the Day of Judgment, he will be instructing them in proper behavior and training their minds in the useful sciences.

‘After having perfected their schooling, on the Day of Gathering he will lead them forth and bring them to the site of Resurrection. There, before the Holy Presence (*al-wajh*/الوجه) of the Lord, he will entreat Him with these words: “Oh my Lord, here are the youngsters of the nation of Your Beloved Muhammad ﷺ who died before reaching the age of maturity.

“According to Your order and command, I have taught and trained them in all useful (*maslahah*/مصلحة) branches of knowledge, and brought them before Your Majestic Throne. Yours is all kindness, favor and grace.”

‘At this invocation, the Almighty Lord will reply with the full glory of His Majesty, “Oh children, go – enter the Gardens of Paradise.”

‘Thereupon, these children will reply, “Oh our Lord, by Your Grace and Your Munificence, let our parents go with us!”

Allāh ﷻ will again direct His Divine Speech at them, and say,

‘You have nothing to answer for, go and enter into Paradise forthwith; as for your parents, they are accountable to Me and there are things they have to answer for.”

‘Again, these children beg the Lord, “During their lives in the material world, we have caused them sorrow through our absence; now, by the vastness of Your Mercy which floods the universal expanse, let us be the cause of happiness for them.”

‘Upon this plea, the All-Merciful and Beneficent Lord accepts the duʿā and addresses them, saying, “Go then and take from the spring of Kawthar and give your parents to drink from it as well.”

‘After this, Jibrīl ﷺ turned to me and said, “Give Salām to ʾIbrāhīm ﷺ.” I stepped forth and greeted him, whereupon he honored me and received me well. Then he spoke to me, saying, “Welcome to you, oh virtuous son and righteous Prophet!”

“Tonight you are to be honored and you will witness the splendor of the Lord of the Universe, and you will be admitted to behold all manner of sacred displays. As for your nation, it is the last of all nations and it will be a very weak nation, so do not neglect to intercede with your Lord on their behalf.”

‘He ﷺ continued, “Oh Muḥammad ﷺ! Give Salām to your ʾummah from me and convey to them my advice: the world (*dunya*) is of a passing nature and swift in its decline.

“In the eyes of the Everlasting it is but base and contemptible matter. He attributes to it not even the value of a fly’s wing. Tell them not to waste their lives in the pursuit of its vain beauties, its pomp and palaces; not to be deceived by its many and varied tastes, by promises of grandeur and large followings. For it is the world to come which is lasting and eternal.

“Therefore, tell them to busy themselves in following the pure ways of the *Shariʿa* (Divine Law) by night and by day, and the guidance contained in your Sunnah so that they might thereby gain the good pleasure of Allāh ﷻ. The Gardens of Paradise are vast, so let them plant there many, many trees.”

‘I asked him ﷺ then, “How does one plant a tree in the Jannah?”

‘He replied, “Through the recital of this *Tasbiḥ*:

Subḥana-llāhi wa-l-ḥamdu-li-llāhi
wa lāā ʾilaha illa-llāhu wa-llāhu ʾakbar
wa la hawla wa la quwwata illa bi-llāhi-l-ʿaliyyi-l-ʿadḥīm.

Glory be and Praise to Allāh;
None is worthy of worship but Allāh alone,
and Allāh is Most Great!
There is no Might and no Power save with Allāh,
the Exalted, Majestic

Tell them to recite this *duʿāʾ*, for each time they recite it, a tree is planted in the Jannah.”

‘Then we directly approached al-Bayti-l-Maʿmūr, which seventy thousand angels visit each day. In front of it there is a sea of light in which they first bathe, then take thereof a veil of light each and wrap it around themselves. This is their ʾiḥḥram. Then they begin to make *tawaf* calling out *labbayk Allāhumma labbayk* (‘At Your service! oh Allāh, at Your service!’), as the pilgrims do on earth. Having once completed their *tawaf* (circumambulation), these angels do not return again until the Day of Judgment, and it is only the angels of the seventh Heaven who go there at all. Jibrīl ﷺ then took me by the hand and we went inside.’

Upon emerging from al-Bayti-l-Maʿmūr the Prophet ﷺ continued and said, “We ascended to Sidratti-l-Munttaha (سِدْرَةُ الْمُنْتَهَى).” Concerning the ‘Sidratti-l-Munttaha’, the learned ‘Ulama have given various differing opinions, particularly with regard to the statement: “It is called ‘Sidratti-l-Munttaha’ (the cedar tree of the extreme limit) because it is the end of all that is knowable, and nobody can know what is beyond it.”

Some others have explained: “Whoever comes from above, arrives here and cannot pass on further down. Whoever comes from below, reaches this point and cannot ascend further. Therefore it is called by this name.” Yet others try to explain it in this way: “The world of spirits ends at this point, therefore it is called the Cedar Tree of the extreme limit.” Ibn ʿAbbās tells us: “It is a tree which is made all of gold. Some of its boughs are made of emerald, some are of ruby. The tree measures a distance of one hundred and fifty years journey from its foot to its top. The whole tree is engulfed by light.”

The Holy Prophet ﷺ continues: “Upon this tree I saw such a number of angels that only Allah ﷻ can know. They enfolded all the leaves of that tree and glittered like locusts, flashing like stars.”

This holy verse was revealed concerning this vision:

وَلَقَدْ رَأَىٰ نَزْلَةَ أُخْرَىٰ • عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ •
عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ • إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى •
مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى • لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى •

wa laqadā raʾahu nazlatan ʾukhrā • ʿinda sudrati-l-muntahā •
ʿindahā jannatu-l-maʾwā • ʾidh yaghsha-s-sidrata mā yaghshā •
mā zāgha-l-baṣarū wa mā ṭaghā •
laqadā raʾaya min ʾayāti abbihi-l-kubārā •

And indeed he saw him another time.
at the Cedar Tree of the Furthest Boundary.

Near to the Garden of Refuge.

Where there covered the Cedar Tree what covered it.

His gaze neither wavered nor did it stray.

Indeed he saw the greatest Signs of his Lord.

(Sūrat-n-Najm 53:13-18)

The commentators interpret this verse as meaning that the whole tree was surrounded and embraced by the multitude of angels upon it. It is related that there were as many angels upon the leaves of that tree as there are stars in the sky and grains of sand in the earth. Some angels took the form of golden butterflies.

All of them came to greet the Prophet ﷺ and when they beheld his saintly beauty, they all gave thanks to the Lord and gave to him the assurance of the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ.

Jibrīl ﷺ, too, had his place upon the branches of this tree, and his was a branch made of green emerald. Upon that branch there is a carpet spread of light, and on it there is a *miḥrab* made of red ruby (*yaqūt*).

This *miḥrab* is the place of the Angel Jibrīl ﷺ. Before it was placed a seat of honor reserved for the Prophet ﷺ upon which no one had sat since the day it was first set in place.

This seat was surrounded by forty thousand seats upon which angels sat reciting the ʾInjīl. To the left there were also ten thousand seats made of beryl, and the angels seated upon them were writing out the Zabūr (Psalms). Forty thousand other angels all reciting the Zabūr surrounded each seat.

Behind us there were ten thousand more seats of red ruby. The angels seated on these were writing out the Qurʾān, and around each seat there were seated another forty thousand angels reciting the Qurʾān.

This has been explained as follows. The wisdom of the Torah being placed in front of the Prophet ﷺ, the Injil to his right, and the Zabur to his left is this:

Before the Prophet ﷺ, Revelation (Torah, Zabūr ʾInjīl) appeared in the world and began fulfilling his ﷺ mission. The Books had already been revealed containing descriptions of the Prophet ﷺ to come and telling of his characteristics and excellence, and of the preeminent position of his nation among all other previous nations.

The Qurʾān was placed behind him because its Judgment (*ḥukm*) will remain valid and unsurpassed until the Day of Judgment, and even the Day of Judgment itself will be conducted by its rulings. It is a sign of its remaining free and safe from abrogation, substitution, alteration or corruption.

The Prophet ﷺ continues: “Below this tree there flowed four streams, two of which were evident and two of which were hidden.

“Jibrīl ؑ told me, ‘The two hidden streams flow into the Gardens of Paradise, while the two visible ones flow down to the Earth. One of them is the Euphrates, the other is the Nile.’

“Then I beheld another stream, by the banks of which tents had been set up that were of ruby, pearls and chrysolite. By their banks flew birds of emerald green whose necks resembled the necks of camels. Jibrīl ؑ then said to me, ‘What you see here is the spring of Kawthar. Allah ﷻ has made you a gift of it.’

As Allāh ﷻ says in al-Qurʾān,

إِنَّا أَغْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ • فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ
إِنَّ شَانِكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ •

innā ʾaṭaynāka-l-kowthar • fa-ṣalli li-rabbika wa ʾanḥar •
inna shāniʾaka huwa-ʾabātar •

Truly We have bestowed abundance upon you.

So offer prayer to your Lord and sacrifice.

Truly the one who hates you is completely cut off.

(Sūrah al-Kowthar 108:1-3)

“This stream flowed along over pebbles of rubies and emerald and its waters were whiter than milk. I took up a cup and drank from it. Its taste was sweeter than honey, and its scent more pleasing than musk.

“A spring gushed forth beneath that tree. Jibrīl ؑ told me its name was *Salsabīlā* (سَلْسَبِيلًا). It is the source of two waters, one is called *Kawthar* (Abundance) and the other is *Raḥmah* (Mercy). Both streams flow out from the gates of the Garden.

“Those entering into the Garden drink from the waters of *Kawthar*, and all the calamities of the heart, base character and bad habits disappear and they become cleansed. Then they bathe in the spring of *Raḥmah* (Mercy). The spring of *Salsabīlā* is the source of these waters. After bathing in this spring they enter into the Jannah and never again will they age and become old.

“Then I saw groups of angels passing in rows before the Sidrati-l-Munttaha, and their rows were joined together in a straight line streaming far into the distance until they were out of sight.

“They formed such a long formation, that were a bird of swiftest flight to fly along it for a hundred years, he would not reach its other end. They moved faster than the wind, as swiftly as the arrow flies. I then asked Jibrīl ﷺ, ‘Where does this multitude of angels come from and where are they going? And when did they begin their passage?’ Jibrīl ﷺ explained, saying, ‘They have been passing by since the time they were created, ceaselessly in passage. I know not from where they come nor where they are going.’ I marveled at their great number, remarking on it under my breath. In an instant this verse was revealed to me through Jibrīl ﷺ:

وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُودَ رَبِّكَ إِلَّا هُوَ

wa mā yaʿlamu junūda rabbika ʾilli huw

no one knows the forces of your Lord but He

(Sūrah al-Muddatḥṭhir 74:31)

“Then they brought before me three bowls; one containing wine, one containing honey and a third containing milk. I chose the one with milk and drank from it. Jibrīl ﷺ then said to me, ‘You have chosen the natural disposition of ʾIslām and your nation will be firmly established in the religion of ʾIslām. Had you chosen the cup of wine, your nation would have been a rebellious and fickle one.’

“I saw an angel at the Sidratti-l-Munttaha greater than all the other angels I had yet seen. He measured a thousand times a thousand years’ wayfaring. This angel had seventy thousand heads. Every head had seventy thousand faces. On every face there were seventy thousand mouths. And each head was covered with seventy thousand cloths. Each one of these coverings was embellished with one thousand times thousand pearls. Each of these pearls was so great that there appeared a sea in its midst in which fish were swimming. Upon their backs was written the *Kalimatu-t-Tawḥid* or the Declaration of Unity:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

ʾashadu ʾan lā ʾillah-ʾilla-llāh

wa ʾashadu ʾanna muḥammadu-rasulu-llāh

I bear witness there is no deity Allāh

Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh

“This angel engaged in exaltation of the Lord, placing one hand upon his head and one hand behind his back. The beauty of his voice was such that it caused a commotion at the Divine Throne itself. I asked Jibrīl ﷺ to tell me who that angel was and he said, ‘Allāh ﷻ created this angel two thousand years before He created Adam ﷺ.’ I then asked where he had been all this time and where was his place of dwelling. Jibrīl ﷺ replied, ‘In Paradise there is a place to the right of the Divine Throne, that is the abode of this angel. From there he was brought here.’

“I went up to him and greeted him and he rose in answer to my salāms. Then he spread his wings, and all the heavens and the Earth were covered by their expanse. He then kissed my face and said, ‘Good tidings to you, and to your nation!’

“The Almighty ﷻ has decreed that your nation might have a most singularly blessed month so that He might forgive them their sins. This holy month is the month of Ramaḍān and it is meant as a gift for you and your nation. For its sake your nation will find forgiveness. I have been sent here this very night to announce to you this great gladness.’ Then I saw two boxes standing before him. On each of them there was a key of light.

“I asked that angel what was inside of those boxes. He told me, ‘In one of these boxes there are the letters of release from the Fire for those among your nation who fast the whole month of Ramaḍān until the new moon, up till the Day of Judgment.’

According to a different narration, the angel is said to have said, ‘Every day of Ramaḍān, at the time of ʾIftār (the breaking of the fast), the Almighty ﷻ frees from Hellfire six hundred thousand of His servants who have fasted,

When *Jumuʿah* has come, He frees six hundred thousand prisoners every hour for twenty-four hours from the Fire until the Night of Power (ليلة القدر) has come.

“On that blessed night, that is to say, during the twenty-four hours making up that night and day, at the beginning of every hour the Lord frees from Hell as many of His servants as He has freed since the beginning of the holy month, including the days of *Jumuʿah*.

“The last day of Ramadan, at the time of ʾIftār the Lord sets free as many of His servants as He has freed during the whole month, including the *Jumuʿah* days and also the Night of Power (*laylatu-l-qadr*).”

The Prophet ﷺ continues:

“The angel told me that the other box contained this precious gift: ‘On the Day of Judgment, seventy thousand persons of your nation will be granted entry into Paradise without questioning or reckoning. Their certificates of release are contained in this box. In addition to these seventy thousand, each one of them will be granted the release of another seventy thousand from among his friends and relations and other disobedient Muslims. They, too, will be released without reckoning and granted accession to the heavenly gardens. This box contains the letters of release for all of them. Ṭūbā, glad tidings to you and your nation, oh Rasūlullaāh ﷺ!’”

By the term ‘Ṭūbā’ he meant to say, “Oh Rasūlullaāh ﷺ, among all the countless and unbounded pleasures of the People of Paradise, the delights of the Ṭūbā tree are reserved for you and your nation.”

This expression is metaphorical; the part signifies the whole, and speaking about the Ṭūbā tree signifies the totality of delights in the entire heavenly realm. In the sense mentioned above, Ṭūbā signifies a tree in Paradise. However, the word ‘ṭūbā’ is also (grammatically) the feminine form of the word ‘aṭyab’, (which means better, more excellent or as felicity). This can be interpreted as follows:

“I give tidings of gladness to you and your nation; those who pass their days in the world in a good way and spend their time in a commendable fashion, who perform good works all their lives, and when they reach the end of their days will return their trusts in the light of faith, uttering the words of unity; whose questioning in the grave by the angels *Munkar* and *Nakir* will be made easy and their graves will resemble a Garden of the Gardens of Paradise in which they will be at ease and gaze out upon the Garden.

“On the Day of Gathering they will be gathered under the Banner of Praise (*liwah al-ḥamd*), and they will receive many blessings under the shadow of the Great Throne.

“They are those who will be given their book of accounts into their right hand and whose reckoning will be light; who will cross the bridge of the *Sirat* along with those who are the first to cross it, and who will by the Grace of Allah be of those who enter Paradise freely, without questioning or Judgment; who will be granted the sweetest of all bliss in being privileged to gaze upon the Divine Beauty of the Lord and thus will have attained their ultimate desire – these are the tidings I give to you and your nation, oh Muḥammad ﷺ.”

The Mercy to all the Worlds ﷺ continued his narration:

“Here, too, I beheld the angel Jibrīl ﷺ in his own true form. He had six hundred wings, which were made of various kinds of jewels and pearls. Whenever he would open up a pair of these wings, they filled the space between east and west. The wings were embellished by all sorts of precious stones. It would have taken a swift-flying bird five hundred, (or according to other sources, seven hundred), years to measure the distance from one shoulder to the other.

“Then we came to an open space from where we could hear the sounds of the writing of the Divine Pen. I said to Jibrīl ﷺ, ‘Go ahead’, but Jibrīl ﷺ answered, ‘You go ahead, for in the eyes of Allāh ﷻ you are more honored than I and all the world contains.’ I then passed on ahead of him and Jibrīl ﷺ came on behind me. We came unto a veil of gold. Jibrīl ﷺ shook the veil and a voice was heard from behind it, saying, ‘Who are you?’ Jibrīl ﷺ answered, ‘I am Jibrīl ﷺ, and Muhammad ﷺ is with me.’ From within the veil this angel intoned: ‘Allāhu ʾAkbar, Allāhu ʾAkbar.’ From behind the curtain came a voice which said, ‘My servant has spoken truly, I am indeed the Greatest, no Greatness is due to any but Me.’

“The angel called, ‘*ashhadu an lā ʾilaha illa-llāh.*’ (أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله) Again there was a call, ‘My servant has spoken truly, ʾinnanī ʾana-llāhu lā ʾillahu ʾillā ʾanā (إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا) I am Allāh beside whom there is no Deity except me.’

The angel repeated the words of the Shāhadah, ʾashhadu anna muḥammadan rasulullāh, I bear witness that Muḥammad ﷺ is the Prophet of Allah.’ (أشهد أن محمد رسول الله)

Again there was a call, 'My servant has spoken truly, I have sent Muhammad ﷺ as My Messenger and My Prophet.' Then I heard the angel say, 'Ḥayy *'ala-s-salat* (حي على الصلاة), Ḥayy *'alal-falaḥ* (حي على الفلاح).' Another call was heard, 'My servant has spoken truly; he calls My servants to come to Me, worshipful. I have invited them to My gate, and whoever answers My invitation, will be saved and meet with success.' Thereafter I heard the angel say, 'Allāhu ʾAkbar, Allāhu ʾAkbar' (الله أكبر الله أكبر). Another call came, 'My servant has spoken the Truth: ʾana ʾākbar, I am the Greatest.' The angel then said, 'La ilaha illa-llah' (لا إله إلا الله). A call came, saying, 'My servant has spoken truly, there is no Deity but I.' (لا إله إلا أنا)

'Then I heard another call, 'Oh Muḥammad ﷺ Allāh ﷻ has honored you with perfect honor over all those who went before you and who are yet to come.' I then asked Jibrīl ﷺ, 'Who is this angel?' Jibrīl ﷺ told me, 'I swear by the Might and Glory of Allāh ﷻ who has sent you as His Messenger of Truth: I have never seen this angel, I do not know who he is or anything about him, but you are now about to find out.' I then asked, 'Are you not going any further then? Does a true friend leave his friend in midstream?'

Jibrīl ﷺ then said, 'Oh Rasūlullāh ﷺ, every angel has his place and station beyond which he cannot go. If I advance even the breadth of a finger, the Wrath of Allah will burn me. My ultimate station is the Sidratti-l-Munttaha.

'Up to this very moment, I have never gone as far as this point. For your sake and honor, however, I have been given permission, and I have brought you here. But I can proceed no further than this.'

'Then I asked, 'Is there anything you request of the Lord Almighty? If there is anything you desire, I will ask it of Him.' Jibrīl ﷺ answered, 'My request of the Lord is that He permit me, when your nation is ordered to march across the Bridge of the Sirat, to spread my wing across that bridge and assist them in crossing it in safety.'

'Then an angel stretched forth his hand from behind the veil, and in less time than the blinking of an eye, he pulled me through to the other side.

“Then he said to me, ‘Oh Rasūlullāh ﷺ, go ahead of me.’ In a short while, he had brought me before a curtain of pearls. When he stirred the curtain, an angel’s voice was heard from behind it, asking, ‘Who is this?’ The angel accompanying me said, ‘I am the angel of the golden curtain and with me is the most-honored Prophet of the Lord.’ The angel behind the veil then said, ‘*Allāhu ʾĀkbar*’ (الله أكبر) and, stretching out his hand from behind the veil, pulled me across. In as little time as it takes for the eye to blink, I had traversed the curtain and found myself standing before him, where he greeted me with every mark of honor and respect.

“In this way I passed through seventy thousand veils, each one of them made of a different kind of jewel. The distance between each of these curtains was one of five hundred years’ wayfaring, and the thickness of each was that of another five hundred years. When I had passed through all of the veils, I remained all alone. Then *Raḥraf* came to me and became visible in the shape of a green cushion, which greeted me with greetings of peace. He spoke to me, saying, ‘Seat yourself upon me, for I will be your transport.’”

During the night of his Miʿraj, the Prophet ﷺ journeyed upon five different conveyances: the first was the Burāq, which took him up to al-Quds. The second was the Miʿraj or the steps on which he ascended up into the earthly skies. The third was the wing of Jibrīl عليه السلام; on it he approached the far veil. The fourth were the angels who pulled him from one veil to the next. The fifth was the *Raḥraf*; with this he proceeded as far as Allāh ﷻ wished him to go.

مُتَكِّينَ عَلَى رُفْرِ خُضْرٍ

muttakiʾīna ʿalā raḥrafin khudrin

seated on green pillows

(ar-Raḥman 55:76)

The Prophet ﷺ continues his narrative: “I sat upon the *Raḥraf* and it took me as far as the *Kursī* (Divine Courtyard or The Foundation).

The Lord Almighty has created the *Kursī* from pearls, and it is very great, so great it is that it defies all description.”

In the Holy Quran, Allah says about the *Kursī*:

وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

wasiʿa kursiyyuhu-s-samāwāti wa-l-ʾarḍ;
wa lā yaʾūduhu ḥifḍhumā — wa huwa-l-ʿaliyu-l-ʿaḍḥīm

His Foundation (*kursī*) is more vast than the heavens and the earth
– and He is not tired by their preservation –
and He is the All High, the Sublime.

(al-Baqarah 2:255)

The commentator, Ibn ʿAbbās, says about this in his commentary:

“If the seven layers of the earth and the seven layers of the heavens were put together and spread out, next to the *Kursī* they would be as a tiny ring which has been lost in a desert.” Between the *Kursī* (The Foundation / كُرْسِيُّه) and the ʿArsh (The Divine Authority / الْعَرْشِ) there are seventy veils. If not for these, the angels of the *Kursī* would be burnt from the Light of the Seat of Divine Authority.

[note: some translators translate *kursī* as “footstool” but it is our understanding that such a translation is both archaic and misleading as is the use of the word “throne” to translate ʿarsh. Both of these terms lend themselves to anthropomorphic thinking and ideation bringing to mind an old man with a long white beard sitting on his throne in popular graphic imagery. Allāh ﷻ is neither an old man nor does He have a long white beard nor is He seated somewhere. There is Divine Authority which is based on a Foundation. For these and many more reasons we prefer to translate the word “*kursī*” as Foundation and “ʿarsh” as Divine Authority.]

The Prophet ﷺ continued his blessed narration: “I passed beyond those veils. Between each of the veils, I beheld many amazing things and saw unspeakable sights and I saw numberless strange seas and within them strange and wondrous creatures.

“I saw many angels of dreadful guise, but to comprehend them or describe or explain them exceeds all human means

“After passing through all the veils, I reached the Divine Throne.

“When I reached the Divine Throne, I witnessed great events. One drop fell from the Throne into my mouth and the sweetness of it surpassed everything I have ever tasted. When I had swallowed it, the Lord of the Universe enlightened my heart with the knowledge and wisdom of all that had gone before and was yet to come.

The light from the Throne surrounded me and I was engulfed by it. I was aware of nothing but that light. When faced with this light, I perceived everything through my heart’s eye as clearly as though I were looking through my eyes. I perceived what was behind me as clearly as that which was before me, at a level with my chest.

“After all this occurred, I came into a state when I heard absolutely nothing, not the voices of the angels, nor the sound of any other thing. This state of absolute silence caused me to experience great terror. Then I heard the voice of a friend reassuring me.”

This is a very important subject which needs to be well understood: the reason for the Prophet ﷺ proceeding to the Divine Throne was not to see Allāh ﷻ, as Allāh ﷻ is not in any particular place as we mentioned above. The Prophet ﷺ was taken to these stations in order to witness the entirety of creation, and to see the manifestation of the Supreme Majesty and Power of Allāh ﷻ.

لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا

li-nuriyahu min ʾāyātina

...that We might show him some of Our Signs...

(al-ʾIsrāʾ 17:1)



لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى

laqadā raʾaya min ʾayāti rabbiḥil-kubārā

surely he saw one of the greatest Signs of his Lord

(an-Najm 55:76)

As the Lord of the Worlds Himself here describes a thing as being ‘great’; how *great* then must it be!

Perhaps the Prophet ﷺ has given us only a summary report of what he saw in accordance with the capacity of our minds; most of what he saw he did not reveal to us, for it is not possible to give a description of the greatest things that he witnessed, as our minds are not fully capable of comprehending such things. Therefore, he did not mention those matters; this must be understood.

The Prophet ﷺ continues his account:

“When I reached to the Place of Authority, I wished to remove my sandals, but the Place of Authority spoke to me saying, ‘Oh Beloved of Allah ﷺ, step upon me with your blessed sandal, so that I might take pride in the fact that the dust from the sandal of the Beloved of Allah ﷺ has fallen upon me.’

“Again I tried to remove my sandals, but this time a call came to me from the Divine Being ﷻ saying, ‘Oh My Beloved, do not remove your sandals so that the place of My Authority might be honored and blessed with the dust from the soles of your sandals.’

“I then spoke to my Lord ﷻ, saying, ‘When You called the Prophet Mūsā ؑ to come to the Blessed Valley of Ṭuwā (الْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى) near the mountain of Tur, You ordered him to remove his sandals.’ Again this word came to me from the Divine Person, saying, ‘In My view, you are more cherished and honored than he; Mūsā was My Word (*kalīmullāh*), whereas you are My Beloved (*ḥabībullāh*). Look ahead and see what you will see!’

“I looked and I saw a great sea, so great that there was no end to it, and no shore in sight. On its near side there was a tree, and upon that tree, there was a bird the size of a dove. In its beak this bird bore a piece of clay as big as a lentil. ‘Do you know what this is?’ I was asked. I answered, ‘My Lord knows best.’ And He ﷻ told me, ‘You are always asking Me to forgive your nation their sins. This sea is the likeness of the Sea of Mercy. That tree signifies the world, the dove-like bird is the likeness of your nation and that bit of clay is the likeness of their sins.

That is the relation of your nation’s sins to the vastness of My Mercy, so let your heart be at rest.”

The secret of that was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ in this ʾāyāt.:

فَاسْتَوَى ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى • فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى •
 فَأَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَى • مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى •
 أَفَتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَى مَا يَرَى • وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى •

fastawa ṭhumma danā fa-tadallā • fa-kāna qāba qowsayni ʾow ʾadāna •
 fa-ʾowḥāa ʾilā ʾabādihi mā ʾowḥā • mā kadḥaba-l-fuʾādu ma raʾayya •
 ʾafatumārūnahu ʾalā mā yarā • wa laqadā raʾaha nazlata ʾukḥra •

He stood poised, on the highest horizon,
 then drew near and hung suspended,
 two bows'-length away, or nearer,
 then He revealed to His servant what He revealed.
 His heart lies not of what it saw;
 what, will you dispute with him what he saw?
 (an-Najm 53:6-12)

He, the Almighty ﷻ, addressed him in the following words:

“Draw nearer to Me, oh you Best of all Mankind! Draw nigh, oh Aḥmad ﷺ, oh Muḥammad ﷺ, so that The Friend ﷻ may be in intimate association with His friend!”

In this way, the Prophet ﷺ was granted the unmediated vision of the Sublime Beauty of He who is beyond all space and time, free from all conditions or qualities, the Unmitigated Principal ﷻ behind all things and all beings — of all that was, is and will be.

To continue with the account of the Prophet ﷺ:

“When faced with the unparalleled honor of a glimpse of the Divine Beauty, it came to me to express myself in the following words:

at-tahiyyatu li-llāhi wa-ṣ-ṣalawatu wa-ṭ-ṭayyibātu

All praise belongs to Allāh and prayers and good things

“Which is to say, ‘All praise, exaltation and worship in speech, all worship through actions and property is due to the Almighty alone, the only One to whom worship is due.’

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

“After I had pronounced these words, the Lord of Might and Glory answered me, saying:

as-salamu ʿalayka ʾayyuha-n-nabiyyu
wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuhu;

Peace be upon you oh Prophet
and the Mercy of Allāh and His Blessings!

“Which is to say, ‘Peace be upon you, oh Prophet; may you be safe from the trouble and difficulties of this world and the next, oh My glorious Prophet! May the Mercy and Blessings of Allāh ﷺ be upon you.’

“In this way, He proffered very special greetings upon me. In response, I said:

as-salāmu ʿalayna wa ʿala ʿibādillāhi-ṣ-ṣaliḥīn;

peace be upon us and [all] the wholehearted devout servants

“Which is to say, ‘May the peace of this world and the next be upon us, for our answering and acceptance of these greetings, upon all us Prophets of the Lord, and upon His wholehearted devout servants, which is the name given to the nation of Muḥammad ﷺ.’

“Jibrīl ﷺ was then informed of this secret colloquy, and from his post he concluded:

ʾashḥadu ʾal-lā ʾilāha illallāhu,
wa ʾashḥadu anna muḥammadan ʿabāduhu wa rasūluh.

I bear witness that there is no deity but Allāh
and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His Servant and His Prophet.

“After this, Allāh ﷻ, the Possessor of Majesty and Glory, asked me:

‘Do you know, oh Muḥammad, which actions the inhabitants of the heavens approve of and what they desire to be done?’

‘I replied, ‘Oh my Lord, I know nothing, and You know everything; moreover all that is hidden and secret.’

“Again the Lord spoke to me and said, ‘Oh Muḥammad, do you know what actions the heavenly hosts love and approve of?’

“Again I replied, ‘Oh my Lord, I know it not, for You know all things, and you know all that is hidden.’ After this, He in His Grace and Infinite Kindness and Benevolence taught me all the knowledge I was in need of.

“Then again He asked me the same question, ‘Do you know what actions the heavenly hosts rejoice in and are happy to see performed?’ This time I answered, ‘They are happy with works that are performed in compensation for sins committed and with works that lead to raised stations in the Garden – those are the works the heavenly folk rejoice in.’

The Lord of Hosts continued to ask me, ‘And what are these works that are compensation for sins committed?’ I answered, ‘On a cold day, to perform one’s ablutions with cold water and in such a way that one’s limbs are wetted entirely; to walk the distance required to join the prayer in congregation; after having prayed one prayer, to wait for the next; these are actions that are compensation for sins. Whoever performs such work will live his life in goodness and righteousness and only good will be his lot. He will be as pure as on the day his mother brought him into the world.’”

“Whoever persists in these three actions, I pray and plead that his may be a goodly life. May he always be surrounded by goodness and remain as pure as on the day he was born.”

The Prophet ﷺ continued:

“Then my Lord resumed His questioning and said, ‘Which are those actions that lead to high stations in Paradise?’ And I answered, ‘To share food with people and to show hospitality, to give *salām* to a Muslim whom one encounters on the road, to get up for prayer at night when everyone is asleep – these three actions lead to high stations in Paradise.’

“After this the Lord ﷻ said to me, ‘Speak, oh Muḥammad!’ ‘What shall I say, oh my Lord?’ I answered. He said, ‘Recite this *duʿāʾ*.’

*allāhumma inni asʾaluka ʿamalan bi-l-hasanati
wa tarkan li-l-munkirati,
wa ʾidha aradta bi-qawmin fitnatan wa ana fi-him,
fa-qbidni ilayka ghayra maftun.*

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

Oh my Lord, I ask of You to be granted good works
and to be released from bad actions,
and should You have decreed disaster for a people
and I should be among them,
then take me from their midst before calamity takes its toll.”

The Leader of the World, the Foremost and Elect of all the Sons of Adam ﷺ, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, Muhammad ﷺ thus reached the Station of Nearness (*qurb*) and was granted the vision of Divine Beauty. From the Station of the Knowledge of Certainty (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*), he passed to the Station of the Witnessing of Certainty (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*) through holding direct converse with the Lord of Majesty and Might. His blind faith in the unseen was turned into faith supported by direct witnessing. The Exalted Lord Almighty informs of this in the revelation of this verse of the Holy Quran:

أَمَّنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ

ʾāmana-r-rasūlu bi-mā unzila ʾilayhi mir-rabbih

the Messenger believes in what was sent down to him from his Lord
(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:285)

The Prophet ﷺ recounts:

“Concerning the above mentioned verse, I said, ‘Yes, my Lord, I believe in all that has been revealed aforetime.’ The Lord ﷻ then asked, ‘And who else believed in it?’ I said, ‘And the believers; each one believes in Allāh.’ (al-Baqarah 2:285) The Lord then asked again, ‘And what else do they believe in?’ I replied, ‘And His angels, and His Books and His Messengers. We make no division between any of His Messengers (al-Baqarah 2:285); we accept and confirm them all.’

“The Lord then asked, ‘What did the believers say when the revelation came to them with the laws and injunctions from their Lord?’ I answered, ‘They said, ‘We hear, and obey (al-Baqarah 2:285), oh my Lord!’ The Lord ﷻ then said, ‘You have spoken truly, oh Muḥammad, for they have received My Word and pledged obedience to My Commands. Now ask of Me what you wish, it will be granted.’

“To this I said, ‘Oh Lord, grant us Thy Forgiveness; unto Thee is the homecoming. (al-Baqarah 2:285) Admit us to Your Divine Presence having granted us Your Mercy and Forgiveness.’ Thereupon the Almighty replied, ‘I have forgiven you and your nation.’ And after this, the Lord of Majesty and Might spoke:

الْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلُّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ
لَا تَفَرَّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ ؕ
وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۖ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

al-muʾminūna kullun ʾāmana bi-llāhi
wa malāʾikatihi wa kutubih wa rusulih
lā nufarriqu bayna ʾaḥadi mir-ruslih
wa qālū samiʿnā wa ʾaṭaʿnā
ghufrānaka rabbanā wa ʾilayka-l-maṣīr

...all the believers securely believe in Allāh
and His Angels and His Books and His Messengers.
We make no distinction between any one of His Messengers.

They [each] say, “We hear and we obey.”

Grant us forgiveness and unto You is the final destination.

(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:285)



لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ؕ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ

lā yukallifu-llāhu nafsan ʾillā wusʿaha
lahā mā kasabat wa ʿalayhā ma-k-tasabat

Allāh does not burden any soul except with what it can bear
.To it's account is what it has merited [by way of goodness]
and against it is what it has earned [by way of the evil it did]

(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:286)

“And after this, He ﷺ said, ‘Oh Muḥammad, this night is the night of gifts, ask therefore for whatever you wish, it will be granted.’ I then said,

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا ؕ

rabbanā lā tuʾakhidhḥnā ʾin-nasīnā ʾaw ʾakhṭaʾna

Oh our Lord, do not condemn us if we forget or unwittingly do wrong
(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:286)

“The Lord then said, ‘I have forgiven you and your nation for whatever sins they have committed from heedlessness and forgetfulness. And I have forgiven them the sins that they were forced to commit. So ask again, it will be granted.’ I said,

رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إَصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا

rabbanā wa lā taḥmil ʿalaynā ʾiṣraḥ
kamā ḥamaltahu ʿala-l-ladḥīna miñ qabālīna

Oh our Lord, do not lay a load on us
as You burdened those who came before us!
(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:286)

“I made supplication for my nation that they might not be burdened with all the weight that previous nations had to bear. My Lord then said to me, ‘I have granted ease to your nation and made their burdens light. So ask of Me what you want, it will be granted.’ Then I said, (in reference to disasters and calamities):

رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ

rabbanā wa lā tuḥammilnā mā lā taqata lanā bih

Oh our Lord, do not burden us with what we have no strength to bear.
(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:286)

“The Lord answered, ‘I will not place upon you and your nation burdens which exceed their strength to carry them.

But ask more of Me, I will grant it.’ ‘I replied, ‘Pardon us!’ (al-Baqarah, 2:286);’ and He replied, ‘I have pardoned you and your nation.’ ‘Forgive us!’ (al-Baqarah 2:286).’ ‘I have forgiven you and your nation.’”

وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا

wa-ʿafu ʿannā; wa-gh-fir ʿlana; wa-r-ḥamnā

Pardon us! Forgive us! Have Mercy on us!

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

According to another version, the Prophet ﷺ here explicitly asked for pardon for each and every act of disobedience, to each of which the Lord Almighty replied, “I have forgiven them.”

The Prophet ﷺ continues,

“At last I said, ‘Have mercy on us’, (al-Baqarah 2:286), and the He ﷺ answered, ‘I have mercy on you.’ Then I said, ‘You are our Protector;’ (al-Baqarah 2:286) and He ﷺ said, ‘The Friend and Protector of all believers is Allāh ﷻ, Lord of Might and Glory; the unbelievers have no Protecting Friend.’ Then I said, ‘And help us against the people of the unbelievers’. (al-Baqarah 2:286)

وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا ؕ
أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

wa-ʿafu ʿannnā: wa-gh-fir lanā: wa-r-ḥamna
ʾaʾnta mawlānā fa-ñ-ṣurnā ʿala-l-qowmi-l-kāfirīn

Pardon us. Forgive Us. Have mercy on us.

You are our Master so aid us against those who cover up the truth.

(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:286)

And the Lord ﷻ replied, ‘Up to the Day of Judgment, I have made you and your nation to be victorious over the unbelievers (*kāfirīn* lit. those who cover up the truth).’

“The Lord ﷻ then asked again, saying, ‘Oh My Beloved, other than this, if there is anything you should wish for, ask it of Me, for I will grant it to you.’

“Thereupon I said, ‘Oh my Lord, you have chosen ʾIbrāhīm ؑ to be Your intimate friend (*khalīl*), and have spoken to Mūsā ؑ without intermediary.

“To Dāwūd ؑ You ﷻ granted great possessions, and made iron to be soft as wax in his hand; You have made the mountains and its stones and the birds of the air to be subservient to his command, so that they joined him in singing Your praises. As for ʾIdrīs ؑ, You have transferred him to a most high place.

“To Sulaymān ؑ You ﷻ gave a kingdom and such possession as no one after him will ever come to possess and enjoy.

“And You made subservient to him mankind and jinn, the demons and wild beasts, the birds and the winds. And You also taught him the tongues of the birds and the beasts. To ʿIsā You gave knowledge of the Torah and the ʾInjīl, and by his prayer, You made the blind see, the afflicted whole, and the ailing to regain their health; You made him revive the dead, and You made him and his mother safe from the wiles of the devil and gave them protection. What will be the equivalent gift You will make to me?”

“The Lord ﷻ replied to this in all His Grandeur and Majesty, saying, ‘Oh Muḥammad, I have chosen you as My Beloved (*ḥabīb*), just as I chose ʾIbrāhīm as My faithful friend. To be the Beloved of Allāh ﷻ is even more excellent than being His friend. I have also privileged you with the vision of My Divine Beauty, and I have spoken to you without intermediary, even as I spoke to Mūsā ﷻ.

“Beyond this, I have given you the chapters of the Qurʾān, *al-Fātiḥah* (The Opening) and the end of *al-Baqarah* (The Cow), which are both from the treasure troves of My Divine Throne. These were not given to any Prophet before you, but reserved for you and your nation.

“Also, I have sent you as My Messenger to all the peoples of the world, to mankind and to jinn, be they black or white or of any other color or description; never before have I sent a Prophet with so universal a mission.’

“I have made the whole earth a means of cleansing for your ʾummah. When you find water and are sound enough to perform your ablutions, make Wuḍūʾ (الوضوء) and take your Ḡhṣl (غسل). But when you do not find water or you have not the strength to wash, you may perform Tayammum (تيمم) and cleanse yourself by means of the dust of the earth.’ I have also made the whole Earth to be as a Masjid (مسجد), a place for prayer, so that wherever you may find yourselves, you may pray and perform your worship.’

“I have made lawful to you and your ʾummah spoils of war, so you may profit from them. To previous nations these were not lawful. And I have strengthened you in that I have cast fear into the heart of your enemy, even if there is a distance of one month’s journey between you and them.’

“I have granted you the right of intercession for whomever you desire. I have sent down to you the greatest and most august of all revealed scriptures, the Glorious Qurʾan. And I have split your breast and removed from you all sinfulness.’

“I have elevated your name, for wherever My Name is mentioned, there your name is pronounced as well.’

• الْمُرِيحُ يَجِدُكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَى • وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَى •
• وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَى •

ʾalam yajidāka yatīman fa-āwa • wa wajadaka ḍāāllan fahadā •
wa wajaka ʿāāʾilan faʾaghna

Did We not find you an orphan and give you refuge?

And did We not find you astray and guide you?

And did We not find you without means and provided sustenance?

(Sūrah aḍ-Ḍuḥā 93:6-8)

“When the Lord ﷻ had spoken to me thus, all I could answer was, ‘Yes, my Lord, all these great favors You have bestowed upon me and honored me beyond all measure.’

“Then the Lord ﷻ spoke again and said, ‘Among all the people belonging to your ʾummah, I have made one group in whose hearts resides the Holy Quran. This was not given to other nations before yours; they did not commit to memory the books their prophets brought to them. This privilege I have reserved for your nation alone. I have made your nation more excellent than all previous nations; your ʾummah is the ʾummah of the middle way (أُمَّةٌ وَسْطًا), and an ʾummah that calls for justice (*adl* / عدل).’

“You I have created before anything else, and I have sent you on your prophetic mission as the last of all the Prophets ﷺ. I have given you to drink from the waters of *Kawthar* (abundance), and I have given you eight shares.

“These are: Islam, the *Hijra* (migration), war against ignorance, Ṣalāt (ritual prayer), Zakāt (obligatory payments to the poor), the fast of Ramaḍān, enjoining good and discouraging evil (ʿamr-bil-*maʿrūf* wa *nahiy-ʿani-l-munkar*).”

“After the Lord ﷻ stopped speaking, I asked Him, ‘Oh my Lord, after I had passed and seen all of creation, I experienced a moment of extreme terror.

“The Lord then answered me, ‘When you were in the grip of awesome terror, We created an angel for you in the shape and form of a friend and gave him a voice and tone with which to speak to you, so that you might feel the comfort of that familiarity when you heard him speak. Then the awesomeness and terror left you entirely, and so that you were not totally overcome by the majesty of this revelation and were able to ask what you wish from the Divine Essence. By means of this familiarity you were able to speak normally and without dread. Indeed, I have no need to turn to any in prayer, but recite the verse which I have revealed unto you:

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ
وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا

huwa-l-ladhī yuṣallī ʿalaykum wa malāʾikatuhu
li-yukhrijakum mina dhulamāti ʾila-n-nūr
wa kāna bu-l-muʾminīna raḥimā

It is He who blesses you and His Angels
that He might bring you forth from the darkness to the light
And He is Singularly Compassionate to the believers.
(Sūrah al-ʾAḥzāb 33:43)

“This verse will teach you that the meaning of My prayer is nothing but Mercy for you and for your nation.

“I have in My Divine Majesty made Myself free from all defect and weakness, and My Mercy outstrips My Wrath.

“Therefore, state your wishes, and ask of Me whatever you need and desire.’

“After these words, the Lord added, ‘What of Jibrīl’s ﷺ request, which he asked you to make?’ I replied, ‘Oh my Lord, You are the All-Knowing; there is no need to speak of it, as You know already, all Bounty and Munificence being Yours.’ The Lord replied to this, ‘I will grant his request and fulfill his wish.

“On the Day of Judgment when your nation prepares to cross the Bridge of Sirat, let them take a hold of his wing and so cross with ease on the wing of Jibrīl ﷺ. Only the ones who loved you and your companions will cross with ease; I grant My Divine Sanction.’

“To this I rejoined, ‘Oh Lord, you have sent punishment upon the nations that went before mine in many and varied forms. There were some upon whom You sent a rain of stones to destroy them; while others you drowned in the waters. Some were destroyed by Jibrīl’s ﷺ shout, and some You caused the Earth to swallow. Some perished when You sent against them a rain of fire, and others died in a harsh, bitter wind.

“Oh Lord, what will become of my ʾummah after I have gone?”

“The Lord of Mercy and Munificence, the Lord of the Universe then intoned in all His Majesty and Splendor, ‘My Wrath has been spent on those nations before you but upon your ʾummah I will shower only Mercy. I will transform their badness into good actions. To the corrupt among them I will grant the gift of repentance, and bring them into a good state of being. I will deliver them from their bad traits and help them acquire good characteristics. I will rid them of their ignorance and change their minds to understanding and perfect knowledge.

“Whoever calls upon Me, saying, ‘Oh My Lord!’ and turns to Me with true humility in his heart, to him I will answer, ‘I am at your service, oh My servant; tell Me what it is that you desire, and I will create it.

“To you I give the right of intercession for your ʾummah.

“Oh Muḥammad, you may be the advocate on their behalf, and I pledge to accept all your intercessions.’

“And then He ﷻ said, ‘Oh Muḥammad, I have not made your ʾummah excessively wealthy, so that their accounts will not be overly long. And I have not made their bodies very great, so that they might not require much of worldly food and drink and dress. I have not made their lives to be exceedingly long, so that their hearts might not be blackened by pride in reliance upon a long lifespan and that they might always be aware of death and make their preparations for the afterlife that follows.

I have not made death to come to them suddenly, but I have made illness precede it and provide a cause, so that they might not meet with a sudden death when they have plunged and sunk in the sea of heedlessness. When they fall ill, they repent of their sins, they pay their debts, they try to make up for past mistakes and shortcomings, and they make their last will and testament. I have brought them into the world after every other nation, so that their time in the grave might be of short duration; they will remain trapped in their tombs only until all the people of their nation have come and gone. When that is done, their time is up and they will attain to their blissful stations in the Garden, enjoying its undying delights.’

“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Oh Muḥammad, sometimes your ʾummah will be obedient to Me, at other times they will be rebellious. Their obedience to Me meets with My Pleasure, and to Me are acceptable all their works which accord to My Good Pleasure; I forgive them their minor misdoings and accord to them generous recompense. For I am the All-Bountiful, and I show Myself to them in My aspect of Bounty. The disobedient among them are subject to My Judgment; but because it is the Judgment of past eternity, I forgive them their disobedience, for I am the All-Merciful, and I show them My Mercy.’

“And then He said, ‘Oh Muḥammad, say to your ʾummah: ‘The Lord Almighty says to you: just as you love a person that shows you loving kindness and generosity, I am much more deserving of your love and affection than any other in this world. I have created you when you were naught and I have given you a pleasing form and I continue to ceaselessly shower you with innumerable blessings.

“‘Not a moment passes in which I do not bestow upon you a new form of goodness. Therefore you ought to love Me more than any other, obeying My Commands and submitting to My Law.’

“‘And again, He, the Almighty says to you, ‘If you are going to fear anything that dwells between Heaven and earth, it is I whom you ought to fear more than any, for My Power pervades all and everything. My chastisement is violent and swift, no one can flee or hide from it, or run to another master in order to save himself from Me, for no one has such powers. As this is the reality, you must beware of acting contrary to My wishes and commands.’

“And the Lord said, ‘If you are going to ask of any, I am most worthy of being asked, for it is I alone who accepts all prayers of need and fulfills all wants.’ And He says: ‘You feel shame and regret when you have ill-treated someone or been unkind, whereas I am the most deserving of your shame and remorse, for I have brought you into being when you were naught and to this very moment I have heaped upon you endless gifts and blessings. I have made you safe from all manner of affliction, and yet you disregard My injunctions and do what I have forbidden to you. Therefore, contrition is your due and restraint from actions that I have prohibited. Obey Me and My Commands!’

“And the Lord addresses Himself to you, saying, ‘If you choose for reasons of personal and covetous choice, I am the most deserving of your preference, for I am your Creator, and your Provider, and the only object of your worship. Therefore, turn to Me, worshipful, in your actions and with meritorious conduct.’ All this He ﷻ, the Almighty has commanded me to expound to you.’

“Then Allāh ﷻ complained to me about my ʾummah. One of His objections was this: ‘I do not ask of them to perform anything ahead of time, all I ask is for them to do what they should in its own time. But, by contrast, they ask of Me to provide them ahead of time. While I have provided them perfectly for so many years, they are not satisfied, even though they do not know whether their lives will last long enough to use up what they have been given.

““Even so, their greed for the things of this world is ever increasing, and they complain of not having enough and are always asking for more. Do they not observe the birds in the sky? Every morning the birds of the fields leave their nests with empty stomachs to return in the evenings having eaten their fill, though the whole world be covered in snow.

““Does not your nation take a lesson from this? While the whole world is covered in snow and not a speck of earth is to be seen, it is He who provides the birds with their shares, will He not provide them also with their own portions? Why does your ʾummah not place their reliance on Him who has forever guaranteed their subsistence?

“The second complaint is this: I do not give their provisions to any other than them; in spite of this, they perform actions for the sake of other than Me (that is to say, they behave hypocritically).

“My third complaint is this: While they are consuming the portions that I have provided for them, their gratitude goes out to someone else. They will say, for instance, ‘In my vineyard I had a harvest such an amount, and from my fields such an amount, from my trade so much.’ But was it not I who caused the vines to grow in his vineyard and the crops in his field, and who gave him success in his commerce? Why do they remember Me not and mention not My Name when they speak of the yields of their vineyards and fields, and the profits of their trade? Wherefrom is this heedlessness; do they feel no shame?’

“And My fourth complaint is this: Mine is all Might and Glory; it is I who grant Honor in this world, in the grave and in the world to come. Even so, they still look to honors coming from other sources. They will say, for instance, ‘Were I only to occupy high office, I would surely grow very rich.’

“Thus they expect honor to come to them through riches and high office, whereas all these are only of a passing nature. When death comes to them, all connection ceases. Does that signal true honor? It is My Command by which they must abide, it is I who give them Honor and Dignity in this world and the next.

“My fifth complaint against them is this: I have created Hell for the unbelievers. Why is it that they persist in performing actions that will land them in Hellfire?’

“To these charges against my ʾummah, I replied, ‘Oh my Lord, Your Word is true, my ʾummah is guilty of all that You have laid against it. But You are He, the One who covers all shame and forgives all sins; You are the Supremely Rich and Generous, the Clement and All-Forgiving Lord (*ar-raʿuf wa-r-rahīm*). In Your Infinite Grace and Kindness, forgive them their failings, conceal their disgrace, and in Your Endless Benevolence, pardon their great and small sins! Let them be overtaken by Your Boundless Mercy and with Your All-Gracious Merciful Compassion lead them into the Paradise, oh My Lord!’

“In answer to this supplication, the Lord ﷻ the Almighty said to me, ‘Had your ʾummah not been so sinful, I would have created a nation of sinners, so that I might make Myself known as the Forgiver of Sins in that I granted them forgiveness. Oh Muḥammad, You are My Beloved, as you are My servant. All Creation I have brought into being for your sake alone. Because of the sins of your ʾummah, I have created My Oceans of Mercy. Oh Muḥammad, regard the high station of honor and dignity you have been granted, in that you are honored by an encounter with My Divine Beauty. I have granted you direct intercourse with My Divine Person, without interpreter or intermediary.

‘Whoever is acceptable to you is also acceptable to Me, and he who refuses you, is refused by Me, too.’

“Then He said, ‘Indeed, you will be the first of all the Prophets to enter Paradise, and no Prophet can enter it before you. Your nation will be the first nation to enter Paradise and no other nation will be admitted before they have gone in.’

“After this He said, ‘Oh Muḥammad, set not your hopes on any nation of mankind, for they have nothing at all. Let your hopes always be pinned on Me and let your talk be with Me, for to Me is your return. Do not become attached to this world in your heart, for I have not created you for this world.’

“Then He Almighty said, ‘Oh Muḥammad, of your ʾummah I have forgiven one third for your sake; another third I will forgive on the Day of Judgment, so that the high regard and station you occupy in My Regard may become clear to all creation on the Day of Gathering, oh Muḥammad.’

“After this, the Almighty informed me of a great many weighty and important matters, but He denied me permission to divulge this knowledge to you.

“It was made obligatory upon my ʾummah to pray fifty times during one day and one night and to make ablutions for major impurity seven times, and to wash a defiled piece of clothing seven times. He commanded me to make these conditions known to my ummah in His Name.

I then replied, ‘Everyone who comes home from a journey, brings presents for those who remained at home; therefore, give me something to take back to my ummah as a present.’ The Lord Almighty then said, ‘One of the gifts to your ʾummah is this: as long as they reside in the world, I will be their Helper; I will protect them from disaster and calamity and I will grant success to their good actions. I will grant them various favors. When they pray to Me, I will accept their prayers, I will protect them from what they fear and I will grant them what they desire.

“Another gift to your ʾummah is this: When their lives come to an end, I will be their Helper. I will protect them from the wiles of Shayṭān and I will give them tidings of the Garden and show them their stations within it. I will make it easy for them to draw their last breath and I will help them pass over into the Hereafter in safety.

“Another gift to your ʾummah is this: When they are placed within their graves, I shall be their only Helper. I will release them from the darkness and oppression of the grave; I will lighten their tombs and make them spacious and wide. I will assist them in answering the questions of the angels Munkar and Nakir and I will make their tombs to be as a Garden of Paradise.

“Another gift to your ʾummah is this: When they arise from their graves, I will be their sole Helper.

“I will raise them from their tombs and make them to have faces of light and clothe them in garments from Paradise. I will help them mount upon their steeds and lead them to the site of the Gathering with an entourage of angels in a display of splendor and grace. I will spare them the terror of that Dire Day. I will lead them underneath your banner and give them to drink of the waters of the Pool of Kawḥar. I will make them to be close associates and companions of the prophets, messengers, saints and martyrs and the righteous whom I have favored with a place beneath the shadow of My Divine Authority (ʿarsh). After having been given many special favors from Paradise, their books of reckoning will be placed in their right hands, and their accounts will be made light and their scales of the balance made heavy for them. I will help them cross the Bridge of Sirat with lightness and ease and lead them into the highest gardens of Paradise in the Boundlessness of My Grace.”

“The Lord ﷻ the Almighty then said to me, ‘Oh Muḥammad, of all created beings, you are the one who has reached the highest honors. On the Day of Resurrection I will give you such great honors as will stupefy the whole world with wonderment. Oh Muḥammad, do you wish to behold what I have prepared for your ʾummah?’ I replied, ‘Oh Lord, I wish to see it, yes.’ He then said, ‘My trusted servant, the angel Jibrīl ﷺ will show it to you.’

“As soon as I returned from there, *Raḥraf* came into view. I seated myself upon him and he carried me down. I descended as far as the Sidratu-l-Muntahā where I met with Jibrīl ﷺ who said to me, ‘Good tidings to you, oh Muḥammad ﷺ, for you have been chosen as the best of all Creation, the foremost of all Prophets and Messengers. The Lord Almighty has greeted and honored you as He has not honored any other created being, neither from among His Prophets or His Messengers, nor from among His Angels brought Near.’

“Then Jibrīl ﷺ said to me, ‘Come with me, for I am going to show you Paradise.’”



And here we will have to stop as the time we have been allotted grows short. Please make duʿā that ʾinshāʾ Allāh we will have a chance next Rajab to complete the story of the ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj.



And so two years have passed and this is the third of them and each year I have tried to tell the whole story but always I have been told, “There is not enough time oh ṣhaykh” but this year I am resolved to complete the story even though still there are many details known to some but not to others so the story will never be told in all of its many details really but at least I will try to add to your knowledge.

I will pick up the story where Jibrīl ﷺ says, “Come with me, for I am going to show you Paradise.”



Paradise.

“So he brought me to Paradise. On its gates I saw written these words:

For one gift of *Ṣadaqa*, ten rewards are granted.

To one who gives a loan *qarda ḥasana*, eighteen rewards are granted.

“I asked Jibrīl ﷺ, ‘What is the secret wisdom of these lines, that one gift of *Ṣadaqa* carries ten merits, while a loan given *qarda ḥasana* (without interest) (ribā/ربا) carries eighteen merits after it?’ Jibrīl ﷺ told me, ‘Oh Rasullullah ﷺ sometimes *Ṣadaqa* is given to one who is in need, sometimes to one who is not. Not so, however with a loan: a loan is given only to him who is in need of it.’”

“On the highest rim of the gates of Paradise I read these three lines:
In the first line was written:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

LĀĀ ʾILĀHA ʾILLA-LLĀH, MUḤAMMADUR-RASUL-ULLĀH

In the second line was written:

ma qaddamna, wajadnā;
wa ma akalna, rabahnā; wa ma tarakna, kḥasirnā.
what we have sent before us, here we have found;
what we have eaten has remained with us as gain;
and what we have left behind, is our loss.



“In the language of the People of Paradise, this means to say: ‘Of what we owned, that which we spent in the way of goodness, what we gave to the poor and the needy as *Ṣadaqa*, today we have found it here waiting for us.

As for that part of our property which we used up and expended, we have already had the good use of it; as for that, which we have left behind us when we died, we were misled and now count it as our loss.”

“In the third line was written:

“The ʾummaḥ of Muḥammad ﷺ is a ʾummaḥ of great and abounding sinfulness. Therefore they are so placed as to be the ʾummaḥ of Muḥammad ﷺ, so that they might find the light of guidance and become enlightened.

Herewith the Lord who is the All-Forgiving manifests the Bliss of Light upon Light. He forgives all their sins and transgressions, great and small, secret and obvious, be they done knowingly or unknowingly, all vice and disgrace. Through His Favour and Grace and Bounty, He aids them in attaining His all-encompassing Mercy, gratuitously, and He brings them into the highest of the Gardens of Paradise. He makes them taste the greatest delights and the highest joys of all, and He makes them endlessly satisfied. This is what distinguishes the nation of Muḥammad ﷺ and endows them more highly than any other ʾummaḥ.”

As it is written in these ʾāyāt of the Qurʾān:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۖ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۖ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

qul yā ʿibādiya-l-ladḥīna ʾasrafū ʿala ʾanfusihiḥ

lā taqnaṭū mir-raḥmati-llāḥ:

ʾinna-llāḥa yaḡfiru-dḥ-dḥunūba jamīʿā:

ʾinnahu huwa-l-ḡafūru-r-raḥīm

Say: “My worshippers, who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allāh.

Truly Allāh forgives all wrong actions.

He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

(Sūratu-z-Zumar 39:53)

as well as in another ʾāyat, which reads:

كُنُزٌ خَيْرٌ أَمْثَرِ أَخْرَجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

kuṇtum khayra ʾummatin ʾukhrijat li-n-nās

You are the best ʾummah ever brought forth to humanity,

تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ۚ
وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ۚ مِنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثُ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

taʾmurūna bi-l-maʿroofi wa tanhawna ʿani-l-munkari
wa tuʾminūna bi-llāh:

wa law ʾāāmana ʾahlu-l-kitabi lakana khayral-lahum:
minhumu-l-muʾminūna wa ʾaktḥaruhumu-l-fāsiqūn

You command decency and forbid dishonor,
and you believe in Allāh [Alone].

If the People of the Book believed, it would be better for them;
some of them are believers but most of them are perverse.
(Sūrah ʾĀl ʾImrān 3:105)

To continue in the words of the Prophet ﷺ:

“The gate of Paradise was made of red gold, and the thickness of the doors was five hundred years of traveling.

The gate had four hundred columns, which were of pearl, of topaz, of ruby and of emerald. In the middle of each of these columns there was a great ring of red ruby stone of immense dimensions.

In each ring were contained forty thousand cities, and each city had forty thousand domes. Within each of these domes dwelt forty thousand angels holding two platters each in their hands. One was filled with celestial garments; the other was filled with light.

I asked Jibril ʾعليه السلام about them and he told me,

‘Oh Rasullullāh, these angels were created eighty thousand years before ʾĀdam ʾعليه السلام, and since that time they are waiting in this very place, bearing platters of light. Their sole purpose is to plead for you and for your nation.

‘On the Day of Resurrection, when you appear before your nation in honour and bliss, the moment your foot touches the threshold, these angels will welcome you and your nation and dress you in celestial garments of light from the contents of their platters as you pass through the gates of Grace and Bounty.’

Jibril ʾعليه السلام then knocked upon the gates of Paradise.

The guardian angel of the Garden, Riḍwān (رضوان) called out:

‘Who is it?’ Jibril answered, ‘It is I, Jibril.’ ‘And who is with you?’ asked the Keeper.

‘He is Muḥammad,’ answered Jibril. ‘Has his time of prophet-hood arrived then?’ asked the angel from within. ‘Yes, it has come,’ replied Jibril. ‘*alḥamdulillāh!*’ said Riḍwān and opened the gates.

I then saw that the hinges of the door were of silver, its threshold was of pearl and its casings were of precious jewels.”

“We stepped inside and I beheld Riḍwān, seated upon a carved throne, surrounded by a host of angels standing in attendance. They gave me honour and saluted me with respect. I greeted them and gave them my “*salām*”.

Riḍwān answered me and welcomed me with joy, giving me these good tidings,

‘Most of the People of Paradise are from your nation.’

I asked him, ‘Tell me about my nation.’

He said, Allāh, subḥanau wa taʿala, has divided the Jannah into three parts, two of which are appointed for your *ʾummah*, and one which is for all other *ʾumām*.”

In front of Riḍwān there were a great number of keys, and I asked him,

‘What are these keys?’

He told me, ‘When a person of your *ʾummah* pronounces the words, *lā ʾilaha illa-llah* (لا إله إلا الله), Allāh creates for him a home in Paradise, and He gives the keys to this home into my safe-keeping. On the Day of Resurrection, when that person rises from his tomb, I give him the keys to his home and he takes up residence in this new home.”

“Then I noticed the helpers and assistant angels of Riḍwān. One stood guarding the gate to the Garden and each one had seven hundred thousand other angels to serve him. But Riḍwān had seventy thousand commanders, and each of these commanded a troop of seventy thousand angel soldiers.”

“The *tasbiḥ* (تسبيح) I heard Riḍwān utter was this:

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

subḥana-l-kḥallaqī-l-ʿalīm,
subḥana-l-karīmī-l-ʾakram,
subḥana-l-musibu man aʿtahu jannatu-n-naʾim

“Praised be the All-Knowing Creator,
Praise be to the Most Bounteous of the Bountiful,
Praised be He who leads who obeys Him into Paradisical Bliss.”



“Then I was shown the bliss of Paradise and I beheld such a wealth of myriad delights that, even were I to spend the rest of my life time trying to describe them, it would not suffice to complete the task.”

“The walls surrounding the *Jannah* were thus: one brick was of gold, the next of silver. Then followed one of red ruby, and next one of green chrysolith, then a brick of pearl. Musk and camphor had been used in place of mortar while at the same time the wall was so clear as to be transparent from inside out and outside in, as a window of glass and the thickness of the wall was a distance of five hundred years’ traveling.

From where I was, all seven layers of the heavens and of the earth were visible, including the Divine Throne and the Divine Court.

The earth of Paradise is made up of musk, amber and camphor, its grasses were of saffron-yellow and purple hues. The pebbles there consisted of emeralds, rubies and pearls.

Then I beheld the habitations of Paradise; some where made of rubies, and their domes were of pearl. Some were of gems and their domes were of emeralds, while others were all of gold. In every mansion there were seventy thousand palaces and to every palace there were seventy thousand suites. Every suite consisted of seventy thousand rooms. In every room there was a throne, either made of silver or of gold and upon each throne was a tent of beryl, in every tent there were seventy thousand beds of embroidered silk each of which differed from the other, and each bed was filled with amber and musk.”

“The *ḥūrīyah* (حوریه), pure beings of modest gaze with eyes like luminous eggs and lustrous black pupils were clad in robes so transparent that their skin and flesh and bones, nay, even the marrow of their bones were visible.

Each one of the *ḥūrīyah* wore upon her head a crown embellished with jewels, and each had forty thousand locks of sweetly-scented hair curling down. Each lock was adorned with seventy thousand adornments, and each one of these trinkets separately emits the sweetest of notes, a delight to the ear. In front of each of the *ḥūrīyah* seventy thousand servants stand in attendance.

Around each of the thrones are set up stools made of silver, pearls, emeralds and camphor each differing from the other.”

“Standing there I beheld the rivers of Paradise, of milk, of water, of wine and of honey.

A branch of these four rivers flows to each one of the homes of paradise and the water is whiter than camphor, sweeter than honey and its scent more fragrant than musk.”

“I also beheld there the springs of Raḥīq (*nectar*/رحيق), Salsabil (سلسبيل/*lit*: “ask your way”) and Tasnīm (تسليم). The banks of these rivers and the borders of these springs are of gold and pearls, of silver and rubies. The pebbles in the riverbeds and at the mouth of the springs are various precious gems and pearls of many colours.

The foam upon the waters is of musk and amber, and around the fountainheads grow hyacinths and saffron crocus.

The trees I saw there were so great that if a man on the back of a swift horse were to ride at full speed for seventy thousand years, he would not emerge from under its shade. The roots of these trees are of gold, their branches of ruby, pearls and chrysolith. Its leaves are of silk, brocade and velvet. Each one of its leaves reaches from one end of the world to the other. Each fruit of this tree is as great as a great water jug, and each one has seventy different flavours.

Each of these fruits offers itself to the People of Paradise. Whenever they desire to eat of it, it falls from its branch upon a platter of gold that moves with them and the fruits comes floating up to their mouths, without effort or without a moment’s delay.

Even were this tree to be at a distance of a thousand years wayfaring, as soon as one of the blessed wished for its fruit, it would be right there at his disposal, close to his lips. He would then eat from it as much as he wished, and after he had eaten, a new fruit would immediately take the place of the one consumed.”

“I also beheld birds in these trees of Paradise. They were coloured in all the hues of Paradise. They flew about before the divans, singing hundreds of different tunes and melodies.

The People of Paradise ask one of these birds, ‘Which is more beautiful, your voice or your form?’ and they receive the answer, ‘My flesh is the best of all.’ at which the bird instantly turns itself into a roasted fowl and presents itself to the dweller of Paradise, even if he has not expressed an appetite.

The bird is just as he wants him to be, and after he has eaten, he instantly comes back to life and sings anew in the boughs of the tree and all these birds sing the praises of the people of Paradise.”

“I was shown eight different Paradise gardens, four of these were actual gardens and orchards.

Their names were:

- 1) Firdaws
- 2) Maʾwa
- 3) ʿAdn
- 4) Naʿīm

The other four contained palaces and pavilions set amidst gardens and orchards and these were called:

- 5) Dar-us-Salam
- 6) Dar-ul-Jalāl
- 7) Dar-ul-Qarar
- 8) Dar-ul-Khuld.

“In each of these four last-mentioned gardens there were gardens and flowering meadows as numerous as the stars in the night sky and the grains of sand in the vastest desert.”

“The sky of the highest Paradise is the base of the Divine Throne. I was shown only the mansions in the Paradise of Eden (ʿAdn/عـدـن), and they were as the starry skies at night. A great many of them were destined for my companions and for people of my ʾummah. Each of these mansions was as great as the distance between heaven and earth. Jibril ﷺ showed me these mansions and told me the names of those people who were destined to live in them.

The Ṭūbā Tree

“I came upon a tree in Paradise of such beauty as nothing I had seen before this could equal. When I came up to its trunk and looked aloft, I realized how tremendous a tree it was. Its boughs spread out in all directions so that nothing else was to be seen but this tree. It gave off such a fine scent that in all Paradise I had not smelled anything finer. I examined the whole tree. Its leaves were white and red and green and yellow and each had a special coating and covering in the distinctive colours of Paradise.

The fruits of this tree were like long poles. Each one of them contained the pleasures and delights, all of the good tastes and smells that are found in heaven and on earth – all were assembled in a single fruit of this tree.”

“I remained spell-bound before the wondrous beauty of this tree and the loveliness of its form, and I asked Jibrīl ﷺ, ‘What tree is this?’ He ﷺ told me, ‘It’s name is ‘Ṭūbā’ (طُوبَى) which means “blessed”.

It is a tree that spreads over a distance that can be covered in a hundred years and that the gowns of dwellers of the Garden are made from the fiber of its blossoms. It is said that any fruit you see in the world will be on that tree.

The Waters of Kawthar

“In the middle of the Garden, I saw a river that sprang from somewhere by the pillars on which rests the Divine Throne from which all Authority flows. Its flow was made up of water, milk, wine and honey, and yet these four did not mix.

The banks of this river were of chrysolite and the pebbles of the riverbed were precious gems. Its mud was amber and its weeds were saffron crocuses. All along its banks were innumerable drinking cups of silver, as many as there are stars in the sky. Birds flew alongside whose necks were as long as the necks of camels. To eat of their flesh and to drink of the waters of that river – a sign of the manifest Favor of Allāh ﷻ!”

“I asked Jibrīl ﷺ about this river and he told me, ‘This is the water of Kawthar. Inform your ʾummah of this. In every grove and garden of Paradise there flows a stream the waters of which rise from the spring of Kawthar.’

“Along the banks of this stream, I saw tents of pearl and red ruby and I asked Jibrīl ﷺ and he said, ‘Those are the dwellings of your wives.’ Within the tents I espied moon-faced *ḥūrīyah* whose features shone with the radiance of the sun. All at once, they broke out into song, and this is what they sang:

‘We always sing our tune, never do we tire;
We are always pleased, and we know no sadness;
We are always clothed, we are never bare.
We are forever young, and shall never grow old;
We are contented anytime, never are we cross.
We shall always be, never shall we die.
We belong to them, and they to us forever;
ah, everlasting bliss!’



“The voices of the *ḥūrīyah* reached to all the far corners of Paradise. They reached every pavilion and every tree, and all resounded with such profound bliss that, were only the slightest part of it to reach the Earth, no trouble would remain upon it, nor death.”

“Jibrīl ﷺ then asked me, ‘Do you wish to behold their beauty?’ ‘Indeed, I do,’ I replied.

“Thereupon, one tent flap was lifted and I glimpsed a face of such beauty, that even were I to spend the rest of my life my life trying to describe it, I could not accomplish even the slightest fraction of its description.

“Their faces were whiter than milk, their lips redder than red ruby, and more radiant than the sun. Their complexions were softer than the velvety petals of the red rose or the softest silken cloth. More luminous were they than the moon at its fullest, and their scent was more pleasing than musk. Their tresses were of the darkest shade of ebony. Some wore them plaited, while others wore their hair loose, and some bound it with ties. Those who wore their hair loosened were covered by it as by a tent when they were seated, their hair reaching down to their feet. Each had in front of her a servant. Jibrīl ﷺ explained to me, “These are intended for your *ʾummah*.”



The Rivers

“One of the most amazing things I saw in the Jannah were the four rivers that flowed through it.”

As Allāh Almighty describes in His Holy Book:

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ ۖ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ مَّاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ
لَّبَنٍ لَّمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ خَمْرٍ لَّذَّةٌ لِلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ عَسَلٍ
مُّصَفًّى ۖ وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ

mathalu-l-jannati-l-latī wuʿida-l-muttaqūna
fīha ʾanhārum-min māʾin għayri ʾāāsiniñw-
wa ʾanhārum-mil-labanil-lam yataghayyar ṭaʿmuhu
wa ʾanharum-min khamril-ladhḍḥatil-li-sh-shāribīna
wa ʾanhārum-min ʿasalim-muṣaffa:
wa lahum fīha miñ kulli-ṭḥ-ṭhamārati
wa magħfiratum-mir-rabbiḥim

An image of the Garden which is promised to those who have taqwa:
in it there are rivers of water which will never spoil
and rivers of milk whose taste will never change
and rivers of wine, delightful to all who drink it,
and rivers of honey of undiluted purity;
in it they will have fruit of every kind
and forgiveness from their Lord.
(Sūrah Muḥammad 47:15)

To continue in the words of the Prophet ﷺ:

“I asked Jibrīl عليه السلام, ‘Whence do these waters come and whither do they flow?’ He told me, ‘All I know is that they flow out of the pool of Kawthar, but their actual source I cannot tell. You are most highly esteemed in the Divine Presence; perhaps if you ask, you will be told.’

“While yet thinking about this matter, my eye fell upon an angel so great, Allāh ﷻ alone knows his true size. He had a great number of wings and he spoke to me, saying, ‘Place your blessed feet upon one of my wings and shut your eyes!’

“I did as he bade me, and we flew off. After a while he told me to open my eyes again

“When I did so, I beheld a tree. Beneath this tree, I saw a dome, which was so great that were you to place the whole world upon it, it would resemble a bird that has alighted upon a huge mountain. “There was a golden key to this dome and it had a door made of beryl. I then saw that the four rivers issued from beneath that dome.”

“After I had seen that much, I wished to return, but the angel said to me, ‘Don’t you wish to enter that dome and find out the actual source of these waters?’ ‘The door is locked,’ I answered. The angel replied, ‘But you have the key.’ ‘What is that key?’ I asked, marveling. The angel said, ‘The key is this:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

BISMILLĀHI-R-RAḤMĀNI-R-RAḤĪM

Speak these words, and the door will open.”

“So I stepped forward and spoke these words:

BISMILLĀHI-R-RAḤMĀNI-R-RAḤĪM

and lo, the door sprang open. I then saw that the four rivers flowed from the four walls of the building. The angel said to me, ‘Look carefully!’ and as I did so, I saw that on one wall were written the words; Bismi (In the Name of), on another wall: ALLĀH (Allah), on the third wall: AR-RAḤMĀN (the Universally Merciful), and on] the fourth: AR-RAḤIM (the Specifically Compassionate).

“From the mouth of the letter ‘mīm’ in the word AR-RAḤMĀN flowed the river of wine,

“From the mouth of the letter ‘mīm’ in the word AR-RAḤĪM flowed the river of honey.

“From the mouth of the letter ‘mīm’ in the word Bismi flowed the river of water;

From the eye of the letter ‘ha’ in the word ALLAH flowed the river of milk;

Thus I saw that the sources of the four rivers were these four holy words.

“When I wished to depart from this place, a Divine Address came to me, saying,

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

Inni man dhakarani bi-hadhihi-l-kalimat
wa qala bi-qalbin salihin
‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’
saqaitahu min hadhihi-l-anharu-l-arbaʿa.

Truly whoever remembers Me by speaking these words
BISMILLĀHI-R-RAḤMĀNI-R-RAḤĪM
with a pure heart and sincere intent,
him I will give to drink from these four rivers of Paradise.



الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

alḥamdu li-llāhi rabbi-l-ʿalamīn

All Praise is due to the Lord of All the Worlds.

Amīn

“Then looking about I saw palaces and pavilions of the Jannah, made of pearls and rubies. Between each of them lay a distance as great as east is removed from west. I asked Jibrīl ﷺ, ‘To whom do these pavilions belong?’ and he told me, ‘They are for such people as took a blind man by the hand and led him for seven paces.’ I asked, ‘Shall I give news of this to my ʿummah?’ and he answered, ‘Yes, give them the good news, but know that there is even better news ahead, and tell them of that as well.’

“If a Muslim rises in the morning, saying ‘*bismillāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm*’, then makes his ablution and prays his morning prayer, Allāh ﷻ will prepare for him a place in the Garden which is twenty times as large as the Earth from east to west.”

“After this, I came to see ʾIdrīs (إدريس) عليه السلام, the Prophet, and I saluted him. He returned my Salams ceremoniously and bade me welcome. I then said to him, ‘What a beautiful place you have come to dwell in!’ He said to me in response, ‘What is it to me; if only I could have been in the world now to be reckoned as one of your ʿummah!’ I then said, ‘You have been spared the pangs of death and have reached this high station; what do you want of the world?’ He answered me, ‘And if I had to suffer the death throes of the entire world since the day of its creation, if only I had been honoured to be alive in your time and to be counted as one of your ʿummah.’

“I then asked him, ‘Oh my brother ʾIdrīs, what is the reason for this desire of yours?’ He replied, ‘Whichever mansion in Paradise I go to, however many *ḥūrīyah* I turn towards, all of them are saying, ‘We belong to the ʾummah of Muḥammad ﷺ.’



“One day I came to a mountain, which they call the ‘*Jabalu-r-Raḥmah*’ (الجبل الرحمة), the Mount of Mercy. Its peak reaches up to the Divine Throne of Authority (*al-ʿarsh*/العرش) and it is made of musk and amber.

There are two entrances set upon this mountain, both made of pure white silver. The distance between these two gates is so great that a rider galloping in haste upon a swift steed for five hundred years would not be able to cross it.

Inside it were such a great number of palaces and mansions that would be impossible to enumerate. To attempt to describe their beauty and splendour is likewise beyond all human means. I asked, to which one of the Prophets ﷺ do these mansions belong?”

The Lord Almighty then addressed me, saying, ‘This is not a place belonging to any Prophet, but it belongs to any one of the nation of Muḥammed who prays two cycles of prayer (*rakʿatayn*/ركعتين) I will give a mansion here.’

“In a word, I witnessed in the Jannah such Divine Gifts of Grace as no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no one’s heart has ever imagined.

“After all was done, I left the Jannah together with Jibrīl ﷺ and we descended once more to the seventh heaven. I spoke once more to the Prophet ʾIbrāhīm ﷺ. We saluted each other and he congratulated me on my Ascension (*miʿrāj*/المعراج) but did not ask me any questions.”

“Then we descended to the sixth heaven and I met the Prophet Mūsā ﷺ who also congratulated me on my Ascension. We greeted one another, and after greeting me he asked me, ‘Oh Messenger of Allāh ﷺ what duties have been imposed upon your ʾummah?’ I began to tell him, ‘Our Lord has commanded us to pray fifty times every night and day, to fast six months of the year, to wash seven times in case of incurring a state of major impurity and, furthermore to wash any contaminated garment seven times to purify it.’

When Mūsā ﷺ had heard this he said, ‘Your ʾummah does not have the strength to keep all these commands. By Allāh, before your time, I have experienced the nature of man, I employed every imaginable means to persuade my ʾummah of the Bani Isrāʿil by oath and by injunction and still, they could not fulfill this order.

Go back, implore our Lord that He lessen the burden for your ʾummah.”

“And so I turned back until I reached the Sidratu-l-Muntaha where I threw myself down in prostration before the Lord, pleading with Him, ‘Oh my Lord, my ʾummah is weak ; fifty prayers a day, six months of fasting, seven baths of purification; neither they nor I will not be able to keep, and we will fall short of our requirements. By Your Grace and Loving kindness, please lighten our load!”

“After this plea, He ﷻ reduced it by ten prayer times, one month of fasting and one bath. Again I met Mūsā ﷺ and told him what I had now been given.

“He said, ‘Still your ʾummah will still not be able to carry forty periods of prayer, five months of fasting and six baths of purification. Surely they will fall short of their requirement. Have pity on your nation and plead for their load to be lightened.’

“So again I went back to the Sidra and begged Allāh ﷻ to lighten the burden on my ʾummah and again ten prayer times, one month of fasting and one bath were lifted from them.

“Again I came back to Mūsā ﷺ and told him what I had received and yet again he said, ‘Your ʾummah is a weak community. Thirty times of prayer, four months of fasting and five baths are still too much for them. Go back and ask for their load to be lightened.’

“Again I returned to the Sidrah and threw myself down before the Almighty, praying that He might lift some more of the load off my ʾummah, and again my prayer was granted. I came back and spoke once more to Mūsā ﷺ and again he sent me back, and I went yet again to plead with the Lord and to ask for a further lightening of the task. In this way it went on, until I had received the command for my ʾummah to keep five prayer times during one night and one day; to fast one month a year; to bathe once for purification and to wash their polluted garment once only.

When I came back and told Mūsā ﷺ what our Lord had commanded, he again said, ‘Go back again and ask to be given still less.’ But I replied, ‘I have now gone many times and asked for the load to be lightened for my ʾummah, and each time our Lord granted it to me. I am ashamed to go back again; this much I am willing to accept.’

“After I had left Mūsā ﷺ, I received a Divine Call, ‘I have lightened the load of worship for My servants and I accept that they pray five prayers daily. Oh Muḥammad, let them pray five times a day and I will grant them the reward of fifty prayers.

“Anyone belonging to your ʾummah who intends an act of goodness and later fails to carry it out, I will grant him one reward in accordance with his intention. If he performs the action as he intended, I will grant him a tenfold reward, and increase it up to seven hundred fold, layer upon layer of reward.

“Even if he intends to perform a sinful action and in the end he does not do so after all, I will write a reward for him for not having committed a sin. And should he commit it, I will write for him a single sin.”

“After this, I climbed upon the wing of the Angel Jibrīl ﷺ and we came to the Bayt-ul-Maqdis (Jerusalem) where I saw the Burāq tied to the ring where I had left him.

I entered the place of prayer in the most holy fane and prayed there two *rakʿah* (*rakʿatayn*) of thanks to Allāh Almighty for His Infinite Grace and Favour, Mercy and Munificence upon me, all praises be to Him Almighty!

Then I mounted again upon the Burāq and in less time than it takes to bat an eyelid, I arrived back in Makkah where I found that, by the Infinite Power of Allah ﷻ my bed had not even grown cold yet.”

The Duration of the Miʿrāj

ʿAmmar ﷺ told us, “The Miʿrāj of our Prophet ﷺ took three hours.”

ʿAbdullāh bin Munabbih ﷺ however tells us, “The Miʿrāj of the Prophet ﷺ took about four hours. It is also said a glass of milk began to spill but I returned before it reached the ground.”

The real truth of the matter is that only Allāh ﷻ Alone knows how long it really took.

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʾaj

It is one of the articles of our faith to fully believe in the reality of this Mihrāj. Whoever refuses to believe that the Prophet ﷺ went as far as Bayt-ul-Maqdis (Jerusalem) is reckoned an unbeliever (*kafir*). For Allāh ﷻ has declared in the Qurʾān,

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا
إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

subḥāḥana-l-ladḥī ʾasrā bi-ʿabādihi laylam-mina-l-masjidi-l-ḥarām
ʾila-l-masjidi-l-ʾaqaṣa-l-ladḥī bāraknā ḥowlahu li-nuriyahu min ʾayātina
innahu huwa-s-samīʿu-l-baṣīr

Glorified be He Who carried His worshipper by night
from the Place of Inviolable Prostration (*masjidi-l-ḥarām*)
to the Place of Furthest Prostration (*masjidi-l-ʾaqaṣā*)
the neighborhood of which We have blessed
that We might show him some of Our Signs
Surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing
(al-ʾIsrā 17:1)



Whoever denies that the Prophet ﷺ actually ascended from the Masjid-ul-Aqsā (Jerusalem) into the heavens is a heretic and has gone astray. For it has been determined by way of Hadiths of many different paths of extraction that the Prophet ﷺ did actually ascend to the heavens. We declare our belief and confirm them all.

Therefore, because the honour of ascension was granted to him, the Prophet ﷺ bears the exalted title of ‘Ṣaḥibu-l-Miʿrāj’, ‘He who was granted ascension to the heavens’ and may the Blessings and Peace of Allāh ﷻ be upon him and his noble family, *Amīn*

The Return of the Prophet ﷺ from his Miʿrāj

Another one of the names of the Prophet ﷺ is al-Muʿayyad (المعد) or ‘he who is prepared, strengthened, corroborated, willing’ because Allāh ﷻ confirmed all that he brought home from his Ascension into the Heavens and the Gardens of Paradise and beyond.

When the Prophet ﷺ returned from his Miʿrāj, he asked the angel Jibril ﷺ, “Who will believe me when I tell them that I have performed this Miʿrāj?” Jibril ﷺ answered him, “Abu Bakr ؓ will confirm and verify whatever you say, for the people know him as being the Truthful (*aṣ-ṣiddiq* / الصدّيق).”

When it was morning, the Prophet ﷺ stepped forth into the Haram-ash-Sharīf in an exalted state of bliss and enlightenment. When he sat down his uncle, Abu Jahl, the enemy of Allāh went up to him and, seeing the Prophet ﷺ in an aura of light and majesty, he thought to himself, “There is something strange about this; let me go and find out and see whether I can’t manage to annoy him a bit.”

So he sat down beside the Prophet ﷺ in order to vex him in some way and said to him in mockery, “Oh Muḥammed you look so happy. I guess you must have come across something useful?”

“Truly,” replied the Prophet ﷺ. Abu Jahl then went on, “And what is that?”

“Last night the Angel Jibrīl ؑ came to me and took me along with him on a journey while I was wide awake.”

Abu Jahl asked, “Where did he take you to?” and the Prophet ﷺ answered, “He led me from here at the Kaʿbah to the Bayt-ul-Maqdis.

Abu Jahl then asked, “Are you telling me, that this very night you were at the Bayt-ul-Maqdis in Jerusalem, and that now you have come back to Makkah and are right here among us this morning?”

“Yes,” replied the Prophet ﷺ, the Rightly-Guided Messenger, the Intercessor on the Day of Reckoning. ʾAbū Jahl then had this suggestion to make, “If I called together the people, would you repeat to them what you have just told me?”

“Yes,” said the Prophet ﷺ whereupon Abu Jahl called out in a loud voice so all could hear, “Come here, all you sons of Kaʿb, oh people of Quraysh!”

When they had all assembled and were seated around him, Abu Jahl turned to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him to repeat before the assembled Quraysh what he had told ʾAbū Jahl privately. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Last night the Angel Jibrīl ؑ came to me and took me with him on a journey.”

“Where did he take you to?” everyone wanted to know.

“He took me to Baytu-l-Maqdis in Jerusalem,” said the Prophet ﷺ.

They said, “Last night you went all the way to Jerusalem and yet you are here among us this morning?”

To this the Prophet ﷺ, the Prince of the Prophets, the Light of the Eyes of the Saints replied, “Yes, for sure.” But they would not believe him and called him a liar.

ʾĀʾisha رضي الله عنها relates the following concerning this controversy:

“When the story of the Miʿrāj became known, some of those who had declared their faith earlier, apostatized and fell away from their new faith. Some of the idolaters went to ʾAbū Bakr and told him about this. His response was to ask them, ‘Is that really what he says?’ ‘Yes, that is what he claims.’ ‘If he says so, then it must be true. If he says that he went and came back in one night, then he truly did do so.’ Again they asked him, ‘Do you then confirm the claims he makes?’ ʾAbū Bakr replied, ‘And were he to claim to have gone even farther than that and to have returned in that same night, I would believe him and confirm the truth of it.’

From that day on, ʾAbū Bakr was given the nickname (*kunya*) ‘as-Siddiq’, a title meaning ‘the eminently Truthful, the Veracious’.”

The assembled idolaters challenged the Prophet ﷺ, saying, “We know what the Temple, the Baytu-l-Maqdis in Jerusalem, looks like; if you have truly been there, you will be able to answer our questions when we ask you concerning its shape and aspect? There are many among us who have been there on repeated occasions when we took caravans to Damascus. If you can give the answers corresponding to reality, we will know that you have really been there.”

Then they began to ask him questions concerning the appearance of the Baytu-l-Maqdis.

The Lord of Absolute Power, Allāh Almighty ﷻ then revealed to the Prophet ﷺ a vision of the Baytu-l-Maqdis at Jerusalem, so that he saw it before his very eyes. Whatever they asked him about it, he was able to describe to them all the details of the holy site. The men listening to him were forced to admit the truth of his ﷺ words.

“By G-d, everything he tells us about it is true. Even those among us who have been there many times could not describe it in such accurate detail.” Then they said, “What you say sounds convincing but we still cannot believe that you went there and came back. Tell us about our caravans.”

The Prophet ﷺ then said, “I chanced upon such-and-such a caravan belonging to a certain tribe at a place named Rawha. They had lost one of their camels and were searching for it. I was very thirsty, and there happened to be a cup of water there. I took it and drank from it, then I placed it back where it had been. When the men of the caravan return to you, ask them about this cup of water and ask if they found it full of water, or not?”

Later when that caravan arrived. People questioned them as the Prophet ﷺ had told them. They confirmed all he had said and recounted, “At Rawaha we had lost our camel and we went in search of it. When we returned, we found that someone had drunk the water we left in the cup, it was empty.”

They asked the Prophet ﷺ, “Tell us about our caravan, which was journeying in the other direction.”

The Prophet ﷺ agreed and said to them, “I met them in a place called Tanʾim.” Then they asked him to relate in greater detail their numbers and burdens and beasts, and when their return to Makkah could be expected.

The Prophet ﷺ replied to every one of their questions, giving even the names of the men in the caravan. He said, “On such and such a day at sunrise, this caravan will arrive, and at its head will be a white camel, tinged with black.”

On the day he had indicated, all those assembled went out into the desert to watch for the caravan’s arrival, though there was still no sign of it. Some said, “It arrived at the time he said it would.” Others said “As soon as the sun rose, the caravan appeared.” Others again said, “The caravan was seen with a white camel leading it.” They confirmed everything the Prophet ﷺ had said about the caravan and all turned out to be true. They all witnessed these events, but in spite of the fact that there could be no doubt as to the Prophet ﷺ journey to Baytu-l-Maqdis and his return in one night, not one of them believed in him and they all called him a liar.

One day after his Miʿrāj, the Angel Jibrīl ؑ came again to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was in a state of vexation because of the people of Makkah and what they had to say. The angel said to him, “Oh Prophet ﷺ, do not grieve all that much over your what they say, for today I have come to you with great good tidings.”

The good tidings he brought were these:

“In the fourth heaven there is an angel who commands twelve thousand angels. During your Miʿrāj, when all the other angels rose from their places to greet you, this angel did not rise to his feet alongwith the others. Today when I passed by the gate of that heaven, I heard the sound of moaning, and when I turned to look, I saw that the sad sound came from that particular angel whom I was used to seeing. I saw that his wings had been plucked, and his light had been taken from him, he lay huddled in a corner, sighing pitifully. When he saw me, he began to weep.

I said to him, ‘Why do you weep, you who are such a great and honoured angel?’ He said, ‘I am that angel, but I have committed a grave error. For our Lord has reproached me, saying, ‘Why, when My Beloved Prophet ﷺ came to the heavens to visit you did not rise to welcome him?’

I answered, ‘Oh my Lord, at that time I was so absorbed in my worship and adoration of Your Almighty Holiness that I did not think of turning my attention to anything else. I saw Muḥammad ﷺ coming, but I did not think it such an important event.”

“The Lord then loosed His Wrath against me, and brought me into this condition in which you behold me now, my light withdrawn, my feathers plucked, and myself demoted from my angelic station. Oh Jibrīl, pray, intercede for me with our Lord!”

I therefore prayed to the Lord and begged Him to pardon the failing of His angel who pledged that he would never again commit another act of negligence.

The Lord Almighty then replied, ‘Let him recite Ṣāltatu-wa-Salam on My Holy Prophet ﷺ and I will forgive him.”

صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

“I went and told this to the angel, who immediately started reciting peace and blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ and when he had recited them ten times, all his wing feathers had grown back, and he flew off joyfully.”

“This is the good news I have come to tell you, oh Rasulullāh. For the Lord will forgive and pardon all those from your ʿūmmah who recite peace and blessings upon you and your family with a loving heart and He will grant them access to Paradise.”

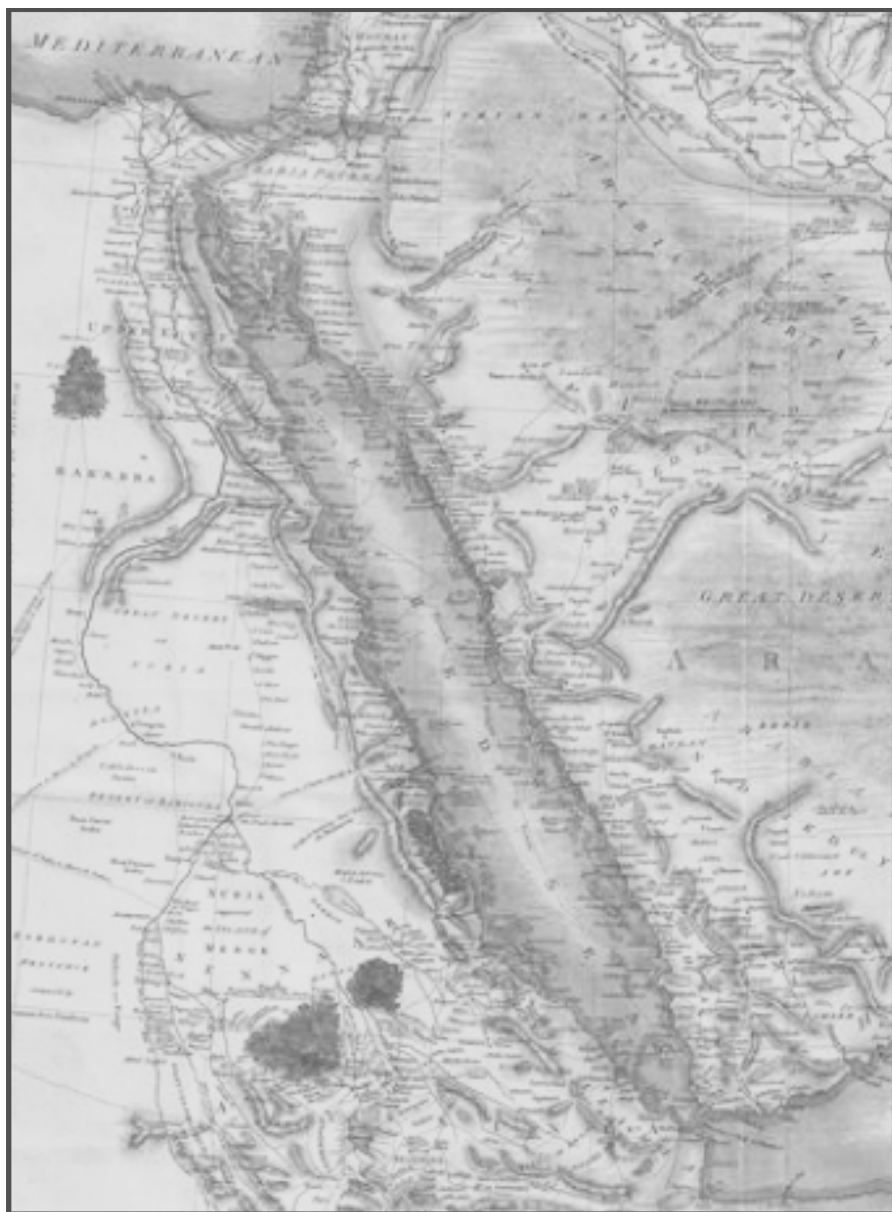
When the Prophet ﷺ came out to his companions after this, his face was as radiant as the moon at its fullest, and he smiled so broadly that his back teeth showed. He then informed his companions of the good tidings the angel had brought him, of how the Lord would forgive all those who recited *Salatu-wa-Salam* upon him, and all his blessed Companions rejoiced with him.

اللهم صلى وبارك على سيدنا محمد وعلى آل سيدنا محمد
وعلى أصحابه والسلام تسليما



وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj



General Topographical Map
(Arabian Peninsula and the Holy Lands)

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

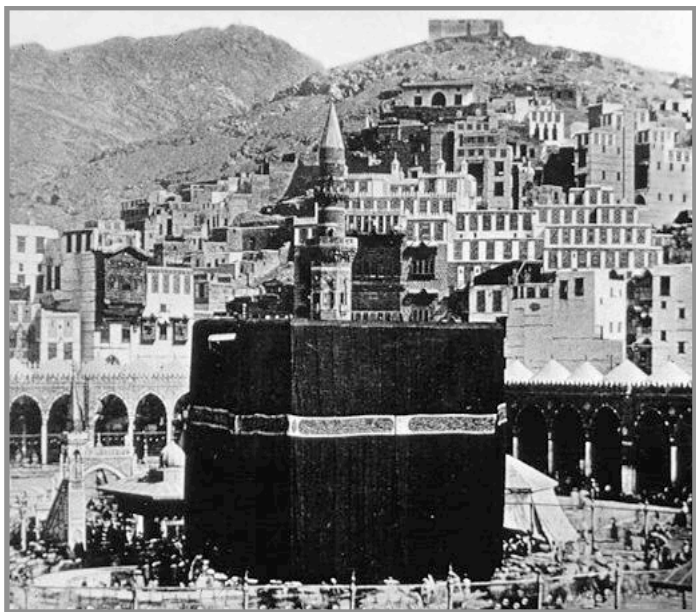


al-Quds ash-Sharīf
(In Occupied Palestine)

The Story of ʾIsrā wa Mirʿāj

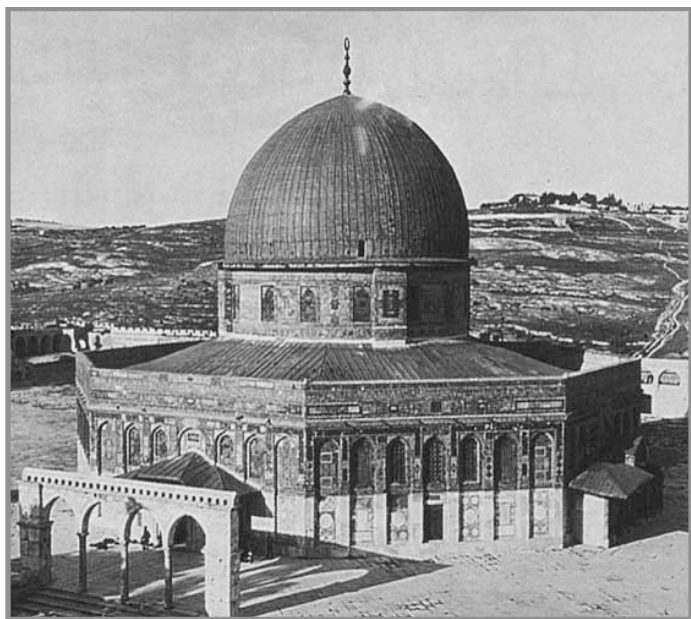


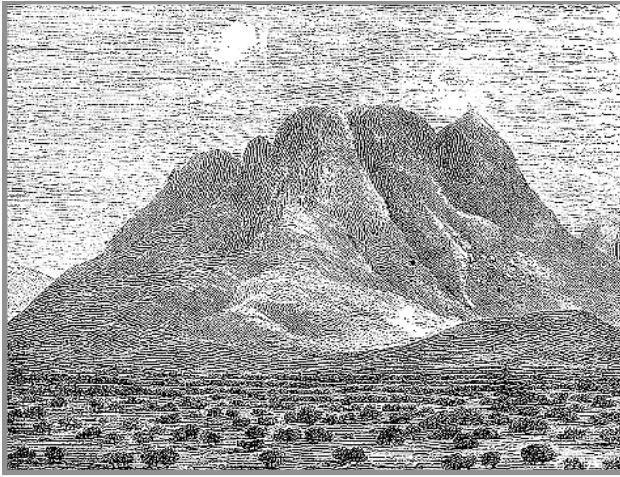
Aurkhtā Basmā
(Incense Caravan Trade Routes)



Makkah al-Mukarama

al-Quds ash-Sharīf

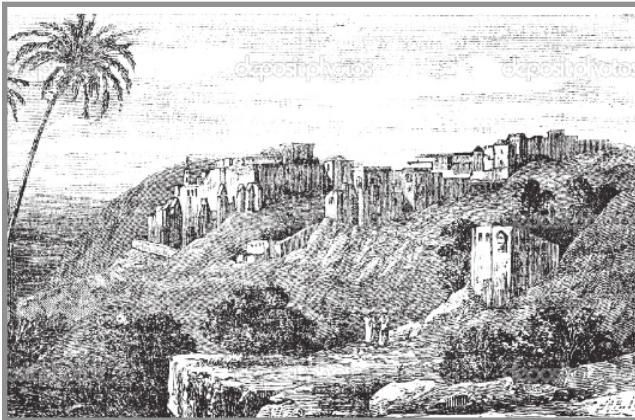




Jabal Sinai



al-Khalil

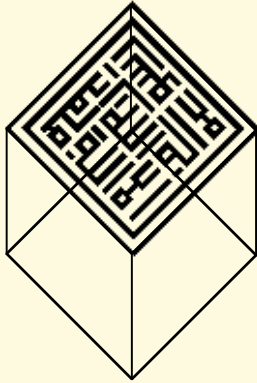


Bayt Lahm

Notes:



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